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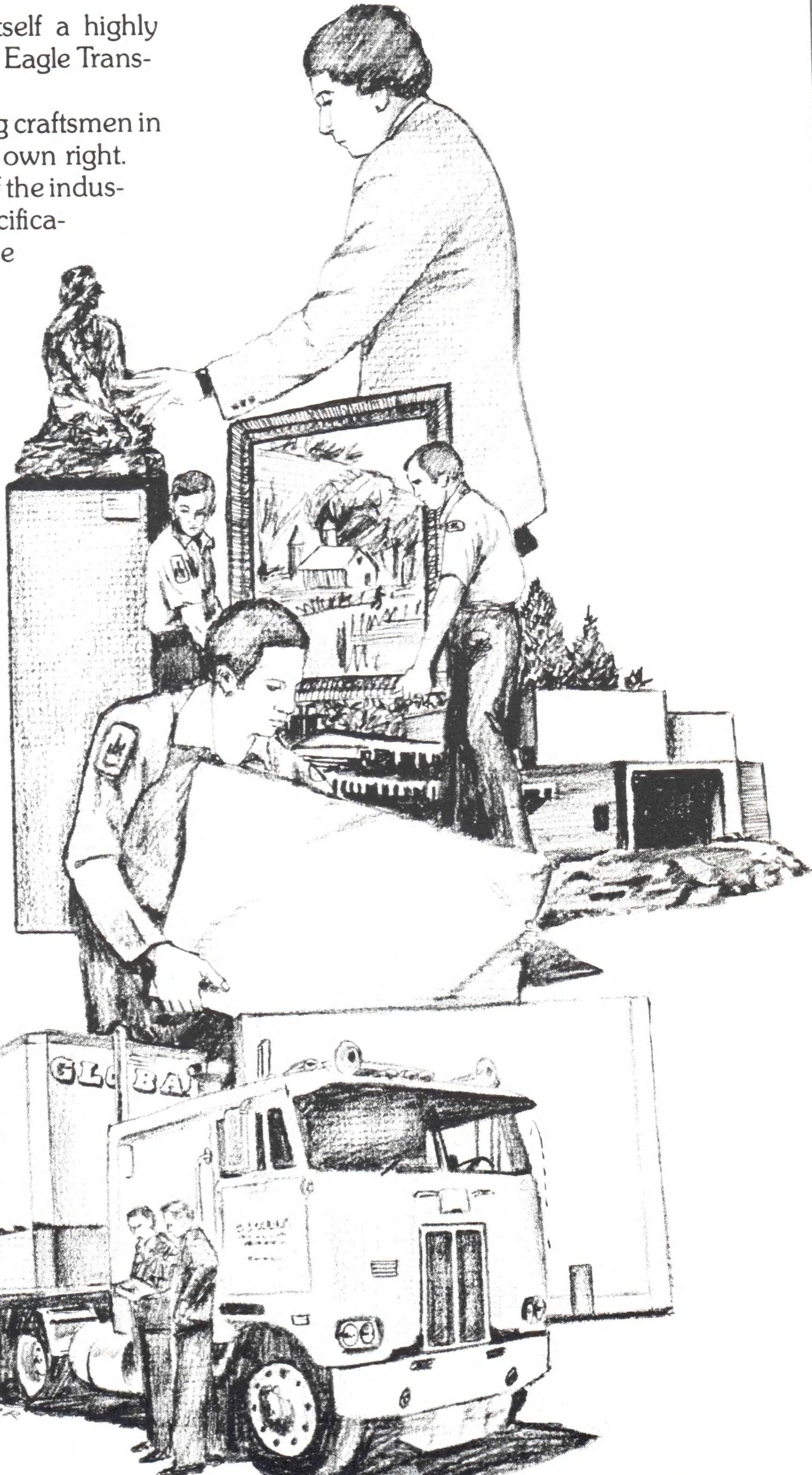

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COVER

Research—long a behind-the-scenes function of museums—is beginning to move out front. For a look at the whys and hows of this development, see the feature articles beginning on page 24.

Tour Organization: The Art of The Muppets II

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

What would happen to the ability of museums to build their collections if the charitable deduction for donated objects were eliminated or severely restricted? This is an issue that the museum community may well have to face in the near future.

Recent abuses of the charitable deduction in gifts to museums have received considerable attention from the press. Both the *Washington Post* and *Cincinnati Post* have urged eliminating the tax deduction for donated objects. Also spotlighting the problem, two recent congressional hearings on tax shelter abuses focused, in part, on the difficulty of developing satisfactory procedures for establishing the fair market value of donated objects. In fact, abuses have been few and, I would maintain, relatively minor, and they are only one aspect of an issue of great importance to museums and all who would preserve our cultural and natural heritage. The emphasis on procedure obscures the more important matter of policy—whether it is in the public interest to use the tax code to encourage the donation of objects to museums, which will hold them as fiduciaries, care for them, use and make them available to the public, scholars and future generations. It is, of course, our responsibility to put this aspect of the charitable deduction issue before the public. But because overvaluation of gifts to museums is a small part of the wide range of abusive tax shelters and other tax avoidance schemes, many of which involve criminal culpability, our task will not be easy.

Our work to secure passage of the National Heritage Resource Act, which would allow artists and authors to claim a fair market value deduction for gifts to museums and libraries, will be of substantial assistance. By taking the initiative—or, if you will, the offensive—we have set the stage for addressing the broader issue of policy with which we are concerned. We must also keep in mind that this broader policy issue is just part of yet another issue, whether the federal government should offer incentives for private support to nonprofit, charitable institutions. With proposals for a "flat income tax" and other tax reforms, we cannot assume that the charitable deduction is secure.

The matter of procedure that is currently receiving all the attention is surely difficult. How can a fair market value be established for objects that have appreciated between the time their owners purchased them and they are donated to a museum? The opinions of experts vary more in appraising market value than in evaluating esthetic or scholarly value. And the extent of the variables at work in the process does provide opportunities for unscrupulous individuals to attempt undue tax benefits.

In the coming months the museum community will have to decide what its position and role in this matter will be. Should an aggressive stance seek to place the debate in what we consider the proper context? Or should we assume a "wait-and-see" approach in the hopes of preserving the status quo?

Whatever strategies the museum community selects to address the growing concern about charitable contributions, it is clear that we need, above all, to articulate the reasons why the charitable deduction for gifts of objects to museums should be maintained. The knee-jerk reaction of those who read about abuses but know little of the ordinary operations of museums will be to restrict or eliminate the charitable deduction. Without an understanding of the invaluable role patronage of this kind plays in the cultivation of American museums and the effectiveness of the ethical standards of the museum community, tax writers and policy makers may unwittingly take away the tools we need to secure the nation's material patrimony for the future.

Lawrence L. Reger

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July 14, 1983

LETTERS

One of the Finest

My compliments on what I believe to be one of the finest issues of MUSEUM NEWS (June 1983) that you have issued. The selection of articles is superb, the articles themselves are superb and each one very clearly makes a contribution to the profession.

LOUIS F. GORR
Director
Dallas Museum of Natural History and Dallas Aquarium
Dallas, Texas

Tangible Objects?

During the Seminar for Historical Administration, which recently met in Williamsburg, several of us wondered about the choice of words in the accreditation committee's definition of a museum, and specifically the phrase, ". . . utilizes tangible objects." We wondered, Is there such a thing as an intangible object? If the wording chosen was meant to convey another thought, we suggest that these specific words be reevaluated. Perhaps some readers can shed light on this for us.

BILL TRAMPOSCH
Resident Coordinator
Seminar for Historical Administration
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Williamsburg, Virginia

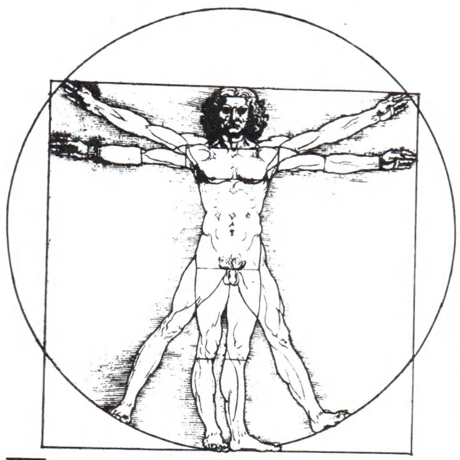
The Role of the Registrar

Thanks for publishing the panel presentations on museum records (archives) in your April 1983 issue. Most museums need to be awakened to the importance of self-documentation. We simply fail, in most cases, to recognize that many of the letters, invoices, memos, receipts, minutes—the papers we traffic in—will be (if they survive and are accessible) the documents for reconstructing not only the histories of our institutions but will contribute to more general studies and histories. It behooves us to develop archives programs that will assure proper future assessment of the roles we have played in our communities and in wider spheres of social and cultural interaction.

At the risk of revealing my registrarial chauvinism, I must say I don't think Patricia Nauert really meant that "the registrar has no particular training in either archival techniques or records management." Perhaps not in archival techniques, but certainly in records and information management, every registrar who survives in the position must demonstrate considerable expertise, whether acquired in the trenches or academia. The role of the registrar, as Nauert knows from experience and as she notes in her statement, is "multifaceted" and quite variable in its range of duties. The position, actually, is still being defined and is ill served by the job title.

Increasingly, those who perform "registrarial" functions will be products of specialized professional training and experience, with emphasis on information science and information management in addition to a museum-related academic discipline. At the moment no one is quite sure how to produce a registrar.

JACK FOSS
Registrar
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
San Francisco, California



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The Museum System in France

MARTA ARAOZ DE LA TORRE

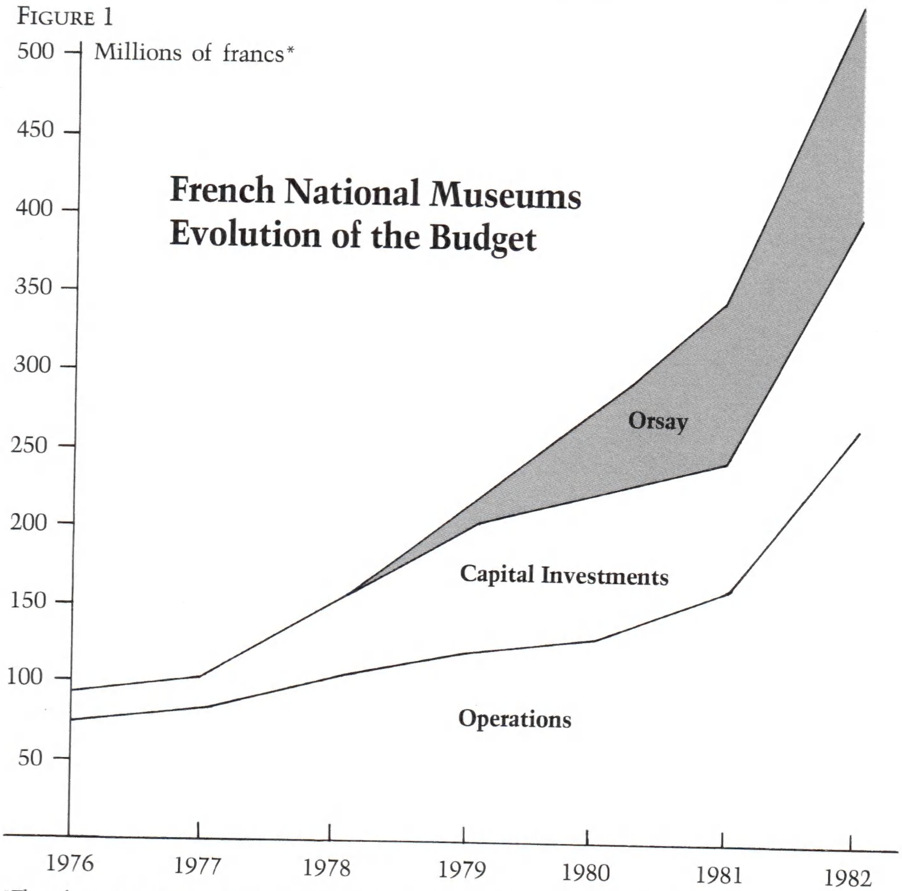
American museums, as a whole, tend to be private institutions and receive little public support. In most other countries, however, the public sector has traditionally been responsible for supporting cultural institutions. At a time when no problem in American museums is more pressing than funding, it may be instructive to look at the organization, administration and funding of museums in France, where government support is primary.

There are an estimated 1,200 museums in France, although it is difficult to determine the exact number. Because the term "museum" is not protected by law, it is sometimes used by organizations whose objectives do not meet the criteria established by French museum officials. Most of the 1,200 institutions fall under the terms of the ruling that created the national art museums organization: a permanent collection, open to the public and presenting objects of artistic, historical or archeological interest. Institutions that fall outside this definition are composed of not-for-profit, museumlike organizations whose collections do not meet the criterion of permanence, which officially means inalienability.

The "official" museums are ultimately under the tutelage of a public agency and are assigned, on the basis of their collections, to a particular ministry or government agency. The Ministry of Culture administers the largest percentage of the museums in France, most of which contain collections of art and archeology. The natural science museums are under the domain of the Secretary of State for Universities, and the science and technical museums are under the Ministry of Education. Specialized museums are controlled by agencies whose areas of competency are related to the museums' collections. For example, naval and military museums are the responsibility of the Ministry of Defense; postal museums, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

Several agencies inside the Ministry of Culture deal with museums: among them are the Sous-direction des monuments historiques and the Direction des Musées de France (DMF), the most important museum agency in the country. The primary responsibility of the

FIGURE 1



*These figures are given in French francs. Fluctuations in the exchange rate through time make it difficult to express them in dollar terms. Nevertheless, to give an indication of the order of magnitude of these allocations, at an average rate of F6.3 to the dollar for 1982, the total budget for the national museums would be equivalent to approximately $84 million.

SOURCE: *Project de loi de finances pour 1982, Ministère de la Culture* and Freches, *Les musées de France*

MARTA ARAOZ DE LA TORRE is projects coordinator for the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Paris, France. Some of the research for this article was originally prepared by de la Torre and Luis Monreal for *Museums: An Investment for Development,* a study for ICOM with financial assistance from the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture, UNESCO.

International

Sous-direction, which directly controls 19 museums, is to administer the monuments that belong to the State, such as the Arc de Triomphe and the Treasure of Notre Dame. In addition, the agency oversees and provides technical assistance for the preservation of a large number of privately owned historical monuments. The DMF, which exercises different degrees of control over approximately 83 percent of all French public museums, has two responsibilities: to administer the national museums and supervise (and/or subsidize) the operations of museums categorized as *classés* and *contrôlés.*

National Museums

The largest and most important collections in France are housed in the 34 national museums. Sixty-five percent of these museums are located in Paris or the surrounding region and include the Louvre, Cluny, Versailles and Fontainebleau.

The DMF has total responsibility for managing and financing these museums. Curatorial responsibilities are carried out by nine head curators in nine large departments, which correspond to the departments of the Louvre (Oriental, Egyptian and Greco-Roman antiquities, paintings, sculpture and art objects), Saint-Germain-en-Laye (national antiquities), Musée Guimet (Asian art) and Versailles. Each national museum is, in turn, managed by a curator with the assistance of the nine head curators. The head curators have technical responsibility and control of the collections related to their specialties in most of the other national museums. All curatorial and scientific personnel of the national museums are appointed by the DMF.

The funds for operating and maintaining the national museums are appropriated within the budget of the Ministry of Culture and channeled through the DMF. The 34 national museums absorb approximately 75 percent of the funds administered by this agency. Funds are allocated to the individual museums in two categories: operations (60 to 70 percent of which are salary expenditures) and capital investments and equipment.

The last five-year official program, which ended in 1982, placed assistance to museums high on the list of national priorities (fig. 1). Special attention was given to capital investments designed to finance long-needed maintenance and renovation work. During this five-year period, the annual budget of the national museums increased by more than 400 percent.

The unity and control of state funds are among the strongest principles of the French national budget and apply to both revenues and expenditures. This means that any income earned by a public agency—and national museums fall in this category—normally reverts to the Public Treasure to cover general government expenditures. A legal status, however, can grant some public agencies, called *establissements publics,* a greater degree of autonomy with regard to the use of income. The Re-

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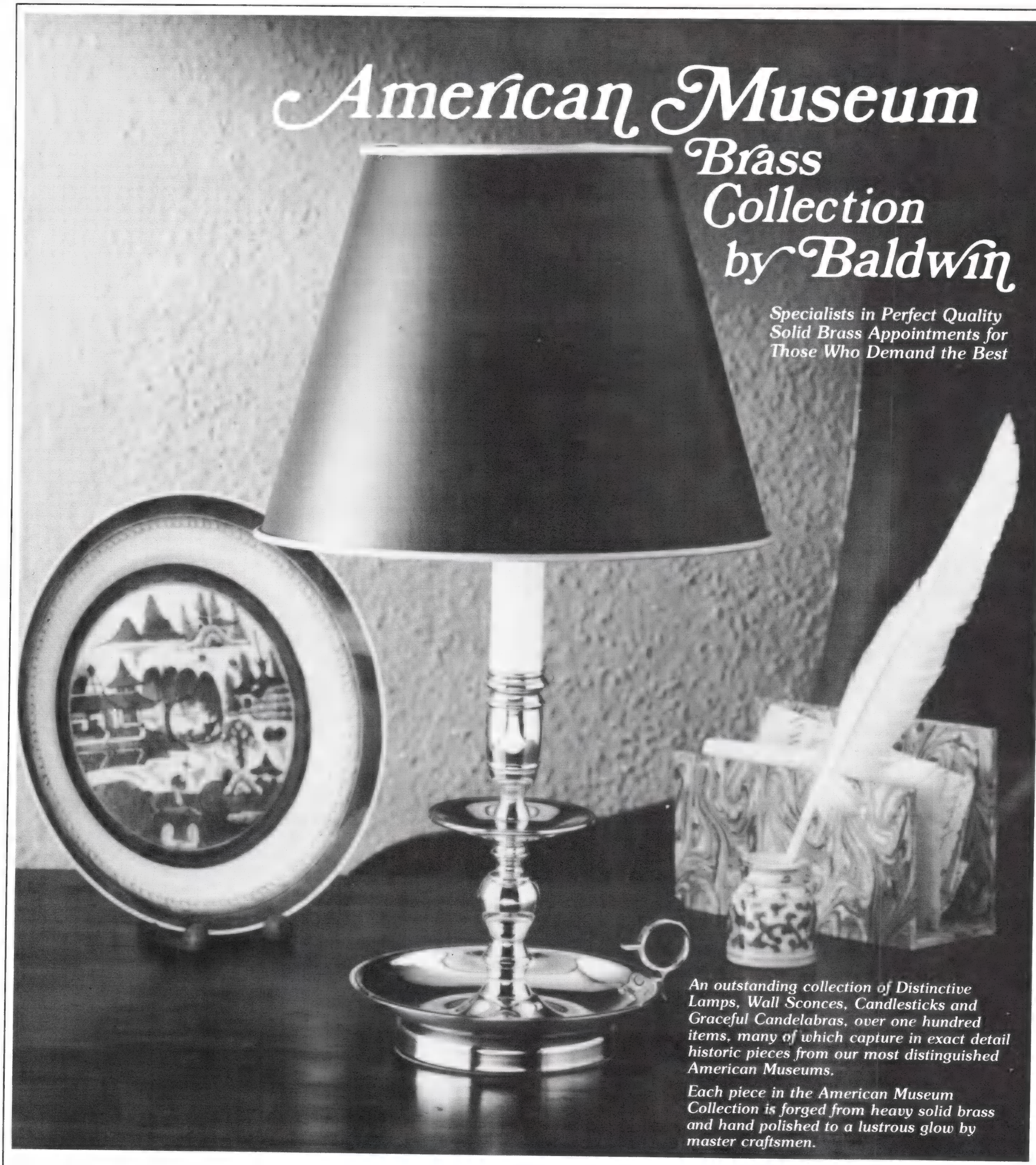

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union des Musées Nationaux (RMN) is an agency of this type.

The RMN can earn, and retain, considerable revenues from admission fees to national museums and special exhibitions and from income-producing activities—museum shops, bookstores, restaurants, tours. The agency also receives a state subsidy for its operations. The RMN finances acquisitions, educational programs and temporary exhibitions (fig. 2). In this last activity, the majority of the resources are used to organize the large shows presented in the galleries of the Grand Palais in Paris (fig. 3).

In 1980, the revenues of the RMN amounted to F52.5 million, or approximately $12.8 million at the then current exchange rate. This contribution augmented the funds available to the national museums by 19 percent.

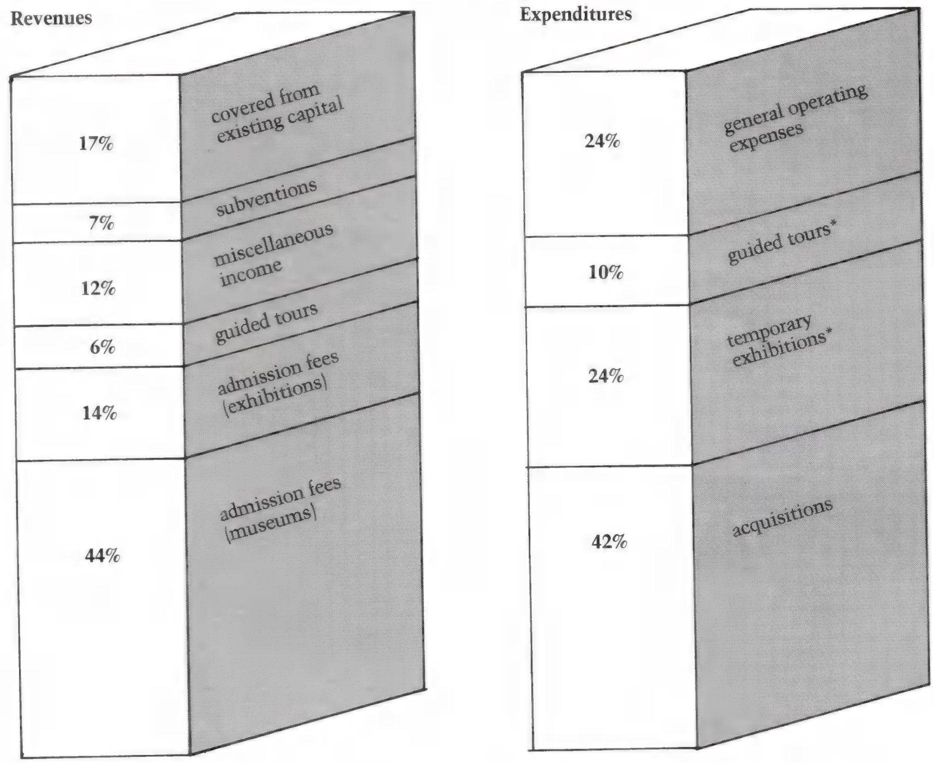
In addition to government allocations and the earned income of the RMN, some national museums, such as the Louvre, receive donations from friends associations. Most of these donations are applied to acquisitions. In addition, the DMF has been granted a number of legal privileges designed to facilitate the enrichment of the public collections. As in the United States, there are fiscal incentives for donating works to national museums, and settling estate and inheritance taxes through works of art is encouraged. In addition, the DMF has the *droit de préemption* at all public auctions. Through this right, a representative of the DMF can claim an auctioned work the moment the sale is completed. The DMF must then decide, within an established period of time, to keep or return the object. If the DMF keeps the work, the agency pays the purchase price to the buyer. The DMF can also purchase for the declared value works requesting exportation permits. The DMF can exercise these two privileges in favor of any of the museums under its jurisdiction.

Museums Classés and Contrôlés

The 31 institutions included in the category of *musées classés* are all mu-

FIGURE 2

Reunion des Musées Nationaux

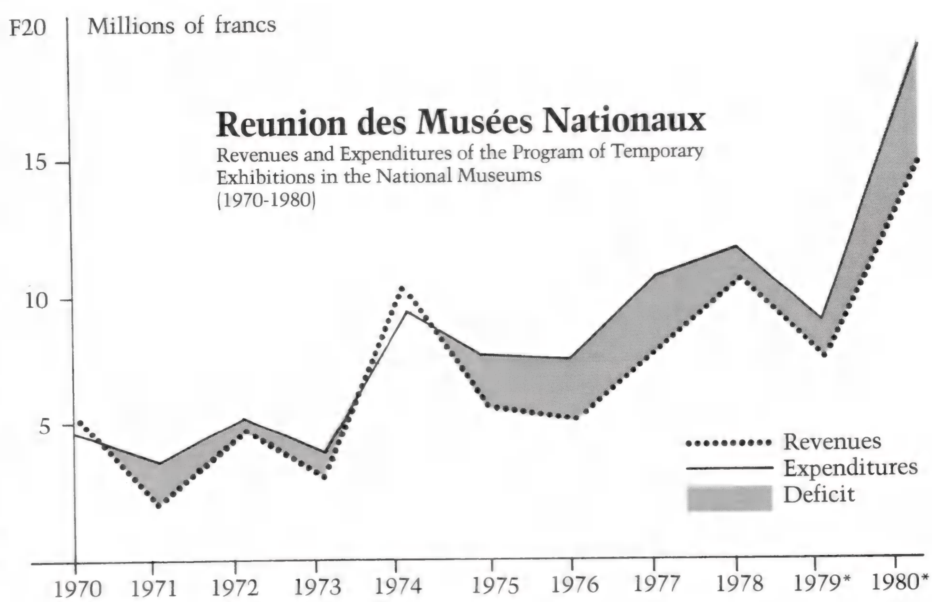


Total F69,092,000

*excluding general operating expenses

SOURCE: *Project de loi de finances pour 1982, Ministère de la Culture*

FIGURE 3



*In 1979 and 1980 expenditures did not include operating expenses of the RMN.

SOURCE: Freches, *Les musées de France*, for 1970-73 data; and unpublished data provided by the Ministère de la Culture for 1974-80.

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The Climate for Raising Endowment During the 1980's

Raising endowment is a key concern among leaders of many of the nation's not-for-profit institutions. While many talk of raising endowment, few are prepared to do the job successfully. More difficult to raise than building or annual funds, endowment fund raising in the 1980's presents challenges requiring the best in fund-raising counsel.

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nicipal museums. Their directors are functionaries of the state appointed by the Minister of Culture on the recommendation of the DMF. The central government pays part of their salaries. The *musées contrôlés,* which include both publicly and privately supported institutions, are nonprofit organizations whose charters guarantee the inalienability and transference of their collections. An object belonging to an inalienable collection is considered public property and cannot be sold or deaccessioned. If a museum closes, the clause of transferability binds the museum to transfer its collection to another public institution. Although the majority of museums under the DMF are publicly supported, most privately funded museums have adopted the necessary statutes for their collections and are now classified as *musées contrôlés,* which number between 800 and 1,000 institutions.

Whereas the national museums receive practically 81 percent of their funds from the DMF (19 percent from the RMN), DMF support to the museums *classés* and *contrôlés* theoretically cannot exceed 40 percent of the museums' budgets. The national government considerably increased its support to these institutions in 1982 in response to the new policy of decentralization, which is intended to increase cultural activities outside Paris. In that year, provincial museums received 18.5 percent of the DMF's budget, a sharp increase from the 11 percent of 1981. There are no current statistics available on how the DMF allocates funds among the 1,000 provincial museums. Figures provided by the Ministry of Culture indicate that in 1981, 120 museums *classés* and *contrôlés,* or approximately 12 percent of the total number of museums in these categories, received subsidies for capital investments. The DMF's allocations are designated either for operational costs or for capital investments, which, by law, cannot surpass 40 percent of the total costs.

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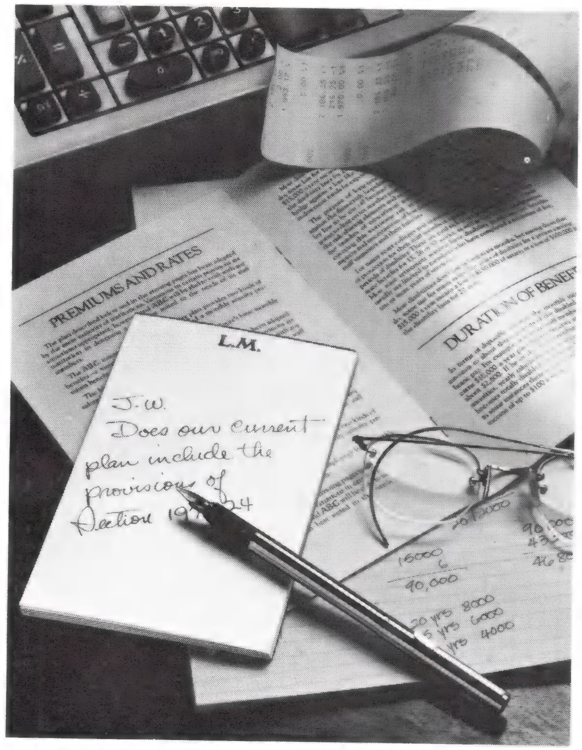

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International

Local funds for provincial museums are supplied chiefly by the municipal and regional governments, with small contributions from city administrations. Regional government expenditures in cultural projects, of which museums are only one of several categories, vary considerably—from 11 percent of the budget in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais to 0.4 percent in the Ile-de-France. Because the total budgets of these regional administrations also vary greatly, the funds available to museums in the Ile-de-France amounted to F5.9 million in 1975, while 11 percent of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais' budget represented F9.8 million.

The contributions from departmental administrations are also important and amounted to F17 million in 1975. The average expenditure of the French departments on all cultural projects is about one percent of their total budgets, of which two-thirds are employed for operations and one-third for capital investments. As with regions, allocating cultural and museum funds varies among the different departments. In 1975, for example, 75 percent of all museum expenditures were incurred by 11 departments, one of which accounted for a full one-third of all expenditures.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The French provinces have always felt Paris has been favored at their expense, and, in the case of the museums, there appears to be evidence to support these feelings—national museums in the Paris region receive approximately 85 percent of capital investments. It can be argued that these large institutions demand a level of support in keeping with their size and importance. Three very large museum projects, however, have been undertaken in Paris in the last decade: the Centre Culturel Georges Pompidou, the 19th-century museum at the old Gare d'Orsay, and the science and technology center of the Parc de la Villette.

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These projects have required considerable investments, investments that could have been made in any major city in France. It should also be noted that projects of similar importance have not been undertaken in provincial cities.

On the other hand, implementing such large cultural projects is feasible in France because centralized administration and funding of museums allow the allocation of funds for specific objectives. A national agency controlling museum funding uses available resources more efficiently. Program duplication can theoretically be avoided, and a more rational organization developed for the museum community.

Centralized policy making in France determines the character of the museums in the system. Although the museums considered "high priority" receive sufficient funding to develop their programs, it is often at the expense of other institutions. Because French museums are supported almost exclusively by the public sector, needy institutions cannot turn to alternative sources of funds. Private funds, widely available to American museums, are rarely tapped in France. Efforts are under way, however, to involve the private sector in financing France's cultural institutions. If French museums succeed in enlisting the support of the private sector, they will be in an advantageous situation, where their basic operating expenditures would be covered by public funds and special projects could be financed by private contributions. Δ

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Annual Meeting 1983 (clockwise from top left): the San Diego mascot Triceratops; participants discuss the day's activities; keynote speaker Maurice Mitchell; keynote speaker William Bennett; members exchange ideas with one another outside conference rooms and meet with suppliers in the exhibit hall; delegates gather for a keynote address.

IN-HOUSE

San Diego and Beyond

Migs Grove

The past several annual meetings have encouraged museums to identify their strengths and explore the external forces that affect them. This year, AAM members meeting in San Diego, June 5-9, examined "Museums in Transition: Addressing the Future Positively." Public perceptions, accelerating technology, shifting populations, depressed economic conditions and changing attitudes at the federal, state and local levels of government all contribute to the effectiveness of museums. If museums are to approach the future positively, they must continue to reassess their roles and reevaluate their current strategies.

David Rockefeller, chairman of the Americas Society, delivered the opening address on Monday, June 6. He encouraged museums to recognize their economic importance and use it to strengthen their bargaining positions with both the public and private sectors. He also called for the development of "revenue-producing enterprises" to support museum activities.

William J. Bennett, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, told Tuesday's audience that the NEH sees museums as important educational institutions, particularly in light of the recent report from the Commission on Excellence in Education. He reaffirmed the NEH's continuing commitment to the humanities-related functions of museums.

New technology has continuing implications for the museum community. On Wednesday, Maurice Mitchell, director of the Annenberg School of Communications in Washington, D. C., talked of the importance of new technology, but warned of its misuse. "There is a temptation to use communications to push people out of a society, instead of making an effort to bring them into a society." Mitchell encouraged museums to use technology to deliver their services, but not to rely on it exclusively and to involve people in what they do.

Keynote speaker Harold Williams talks with an AAM member.

Harold Williams, president and chief executive officer of the Getty Trust, delivered the final keynote speech on Thursday. He outlined the trust's future plans, which include building the Getty Museum's collection, establishing a center for research in the arts and the humanities and a conservation institute for advanced training and scientific research, and developing a program in art education. Williams emphasized that the trust wants to make a difference in the arts, to do something new that will make a lasting contribution. He sought to allay fears that the trust's large endowment might unbalance the art market.

Throughout the meeting it was evident that the museum profession is concerned not only about the problems museums face now, but those that the future may bring. It is not just a question of the "blockbuster" in today's society and economy, but the nature of exhibitions of tomorrow and their implications for the museum community. And what of public and private sector support in 1990 or 2000? The future was on everyone's mind.

These concerns were focused on during the sessions sponsored by the Commission on Museums for a New Century. They reviewed the commission process, questioned the relationship between museums' research activities and their exhibitions and public programs and discussed future trends, speculating about the societal context in which museums will function.

Lorin Nevling, director of the Field Museum of Natural History, maintained that the museum's research functions should be separated from its educational functions. Once "the primary goal of research, to generate new knowledge, has been realized," he explained, "we [museums] need to direct attention to secondary goals—interpretation through exhibits and educational programming." Nevling also speculated that the role of museum research will "shift to some degree, but not to any great extent."

Migs Grove is associate editor on the AAM publications staff.

In-House

Aerial view (1935) of El Prado, located in Balboa Park, captures San Diego's distinctive blend of Spanish and Moorish architecture.

Cary Carson, director of research at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, argued that research and educational functions should be united.

> Scholarship flourishes and public education thrives where museums are highly integrated and where their coordinated activities—including research—are harnessed to clearly defined institutional goals. Exhibits conceived out of wedlock with scholarship seldom present ideas big enough and fresh enough to expand the intelligent museum visitor's experience of life.

Futurists believe that people can choose a course among alternative futures, and T. David Quarles asserted that museums do have options. Quarles, principal, *The Trend Report*, believes that museums' greatest asset is that they are "high touch" in an age of "high tech." "People want to be with people. They will go to a museum to see and touch things," but "people expect multiple options." He urged museums to look at what they do, keeping in mind that the world around them is changing, and to display their wares in the most advantageous manner. Keynote speaker and communications specialist Maurice Mitchell encouraged museums to form committees to study future uses of technology so that they can become "a part of technology as it grows" instead of just reading about it.

Members Pass Nuclear Arms Resolution

Delegates attending the business meeting on June 6 passed the following resolution regarding the further develop-

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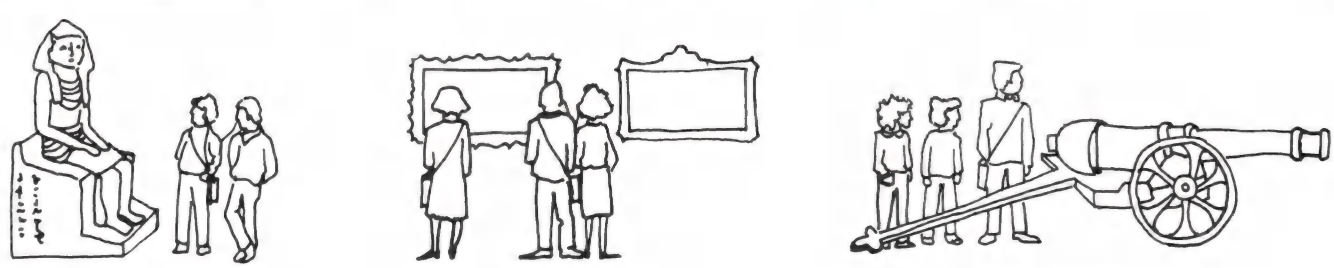

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ment and deployment of nuclear weapons.

> Whereas, one of the major purposes that unites all museums is the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage; and
> Whereas, perhaps the single greatest threat to that heritage is nuclear war;
> Therefore, be it resolved, that the American Association of Museums calls upon the governments of the world to work together towards a halt in the further development and deployment of nuclear weapons and to begin the process of reducing existing nuclear arsenals.

This resolution was drafted by Robert Sullivan of the New York State Museum in Albany and had been presented to the AAM Council for discussion at its meeting on June 4. The council considered nuclear disarmament an appropriate issue for the profession to address, but urged the museum community to discuss the matter thoroughly at regional meetings and with allied professional organizations. Its resolution, presented at the business meeting by Michael Spock, director of the Children's Museum in Boston, called for a period of discussion and a vote by the membership at the 1984 annual meeting. Although the principle behind the council's motion met with favorable response in the business meeting, the call for a vote in 1984 received little support. The council's resolution was overwhelmingly defeated, and Sullivan's resolution was then introduced and passed.

Following the adoption of the nuclear resolution, the AAM Trustee Committee and the Association of Science Museum Directors discussed the issue at their respective meetings. Both organizations concluded that the action taken at the business meeting was inappropriate. The Trustee Committee unanimously passed the following resolution.

> Resolved: It was moved and seconded that the members of the Trustee Committee of the American Association of Museums meeting in San Diego, June 6, expressed their conviction that the action taken by the members present at the AAM annual business meeting today was not appropriate action to be taken on behalf of the association, while not express-

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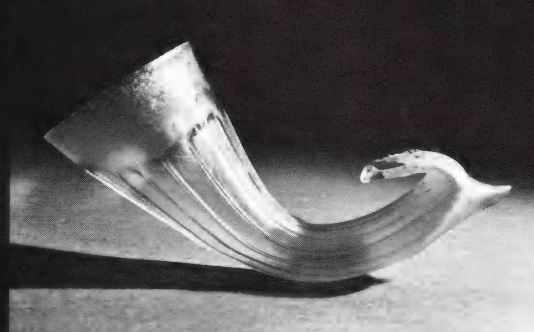

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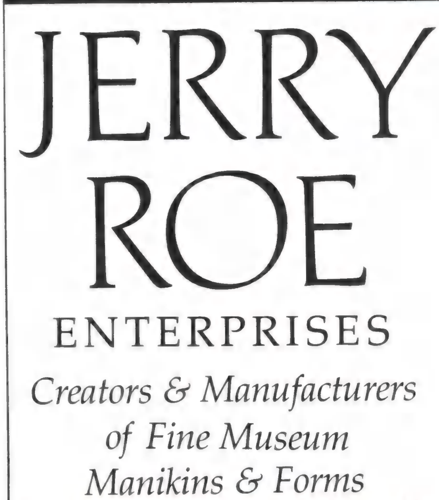

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In-House

ing approval or disapproval of the sentiment contained in the resolution.

On June 8 the Association of Science Museum Directors unanimously passed a similar resolution.

> Whereas science museums are places of scholarly research, inquiry and discussion,
>
> Be it resolved that the Association of Science Museum Directors meeting in San Diego with the American Association of Museums believes that it is inappropriate to take a position on nuclear disarmament on behalf of its member institutions and affiliate organizations, and therefore disassociates itself from the action taken at the AAM's annual business meeting.

Alexander Receives Service Award

Edward P. Alexander, who has been called "one of the leaders in creating the museum profession," received the association's 1983 Award for Distinguished Service to Museums. A prominent figure in museums and historic preservation for more than 45 years, Alexander has been instrumental in the development of interpretation at outdoor historic sites. As vice-president of Colonial Williamsburg (1946-72), Alexander was responsible for the site's highly successful interpretive programs. He also supervised the research, publications and audiovisual departments and organized many seminars, workshops and conferences, including the Seminar for Historical Administration.

Alexander was a director of the Museum Studies Program at the University of Delaware, a founder and president of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), president of the American Association of Museums and director of the New York State Historical Association and State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Alexander has written several important books on American history, historic preservation and museology. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (AASLH, 1979) has become the definitive source on the history of the museum profession. As William T.

Edward P. Alexander (far right), recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, has been instrumental in developing modern-day interpretation of historic sites and raising standards throughout the museum profession.

Alderson, director of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester, New York, wrote in the foreword to *Museums in Motion*, "No one, to my knowledge, is better equipped to provide us with a historical perspective of the museum profession than Edward P. Alexander." A second book, *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence*, will be published by AASLH this year (an excerpt appears on pages 48-54).

AAM Business

A traditional part of the annual business meeting is the assumption of office by the newly elected officers and council members. Thomas W. Leavitt, director of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, was elected to a second term as president. Elected officers include Joel N. Bloom, John Daniels, Allan D. Griesemer and Elaine Heumann Gurian, vice-presidents; Robert R. Macdonald, secretary; and Charles Robertson, treasurer. All officers serve one-year terms.

The new councilors-at-large are Edmund Barry Gaither, Marsha V. Gallagher, Kathryn (Kittu) Gates, Kay Paris and Peter V. Sterling. They will serve for three years. Richard E. Leet was elected to fill a vacancy on the council and will serve for one year.

At its June 4 meeting, the AAM Council elected a Nominating Committee and welcomed an affiliate organization and two standing professional committees. The Nominating Committee, chaired by Helmuth Naumer, will prepare a slate for the 1984 election of officers and councilors-at-large. On the recommendations of the Credentials Committee, chaired by Bruce McMillan, the council approved affiliate status for the Association of Railway Museums and standing professional committee status for the Committee on Development and Membership (DAM) and the Non-Print Media Committee (NPMC). Each organization will select a representative to serve on the council in a nonvoting advisory capacity. Concerned about the number of such additions, the council requested that future applications for affiliate or standing professional status be tabled until the Bylaws Committee has had an opportunity to review the system and make recommendations. Δ

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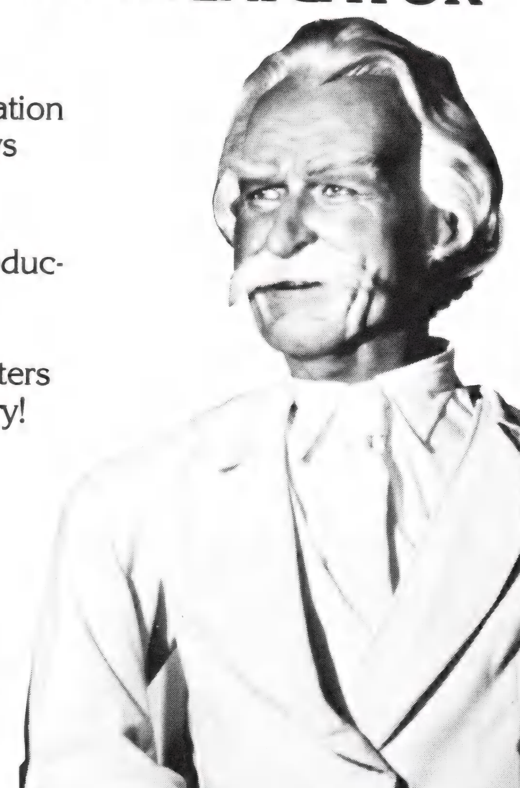
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EDITOR'S NOTES

October 1983
Volume 62, Number 1

Last November/December, Larry Reger's "From the Director" column exhorted museums to give renewed emphasis to their traditional role as centers of scholarly research, to let the public know about this important behind-the-scenes function, and to be more outspoken about the need for public and private support of research on museum collections. We received some letters in response, telling us that research is "not really understood, even in the museum community itself." Pointing the finger more directly, one letter said, "very seldom has MUSEUM NEWS ever carried an article dealing with research."

It didn't take a lot of research (to borrow a phrase) to learn that we have not, in these pages, devoted attention to the subject, so we decided to make it the theme of this issue. Coincidentally, the Commission on Museums for a New Century held a colloquium last year on research, bringing together people from the fields of art, history and science to ponder the state and future of museum research.

The commission colloquium offered insight into the museum profession's thinking about research, worth describing here as an introduction to the articles on the following pages. Museums can be fulfilling any of three obligations in conducting research: to their collections, to scholarship or to the general public. As they talked about the different kinds of research conducted in museums, the colloquium participants showed their disciplinary colors. Among art, history and science museums, there are pronounced differences in the obligations they emphasize.

In art museums, research is usually related to the development of exhibitions. Until recently, with the formation of the National Gallery of Art's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts and the Getty Museum's planned research institute, basic art historical research has been the province of the academic world. In science and natural history museums, the situation is often the opposite; large natural history museums are, like universities, centers of basic research. History museums, not unlike art museums, see their exhibitions and programs as extensions of their scholarly research, and they believe all three obligations are inseparable.

This conflict of views enlivened the colloquium discussion, but even though a few of the scientists in the group at times appeared unyielding in their defense of research for the sake of scholarship alone, it was clear that the historians' perspectives had stimulated everyone to think about new possibilities. The common concern was greater prominence and visibility for research. One way to achieve that, of course, is to bring research into the public eye.

Presenting the research function to the public has become a serious objective for many museums. I don't think it's a coincidence that I've been more and more aware of research programs in museums as I've traveled around the country in the past year or so. In New Orleans, I saw the Louisiana State Museum's archives, which are the center of scholarly research on Louisiana's colonial history. I heard about a program funded by the Maine Humanities Council that enables small museums and academic historians to work together to add a new dimension to the museums' collections through research. At a meeting in Williamsburg, I heard the fascinating story of the reinterpretation of the Governor's Mansion. The Henry R. Luce Foundation's new program of grants to art museums for research in American art was encouraging news that another private funding agency recognizes the back seat scholarly work often takes.

We've planned this issue to accomplish two things. We wanted to open the topic of research for discussion once again, and in order to do that we asked three museum directors to write essays from their own personal perspectives. It *has* been some time since MUSEUM NEWS addressed the subject at length, and we hope these essays begin to make amends. We then wanted to move to a new kind of discussion—bringing the research function of museums before the public. Research may indeed have been the hidden agenda for too long, but it will only come to the forefront if museums assert strongly and publicly the inherent value of research to all their other activities. The research function shouldn't be too difficult to explain. One museum director at the commission's colloquium put it well. "The case for research," he said, "is the case for public understanding of our heritage."

Ellen Cochran Hicks

Research in Museums

What is the function of research in museums? To describe some boundaries to that large question, we asked three museum scholars to tell us what they thought the role of research should be. Their responses suggest that it is defined in part by a museum's discipline. In conducting research, a museum can be fulfilling one or more of several obligations: to its collections, to its public, to scholarship. The mixture and balance vary among museums of history, art and natural history. But there is agreement about one thing, and in this the authors of other articles in this issue strongly concur: museum research, for a variety of compelling reasons, deserves greater prominence and visibility.

James Deetz is director of the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley. Peter C. Marzio is director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas. Thomas D. Nicholson is director of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

—Ed.

The Artifact and Its Context

JAMES DEETZ

Visitors walking down Duke of Gloucester Street in Williamsburg or enjoying an exhibit on the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition at the Lowie Museum in Berkeley probably give little thought to the amount of research involved in the presentation of the American past in history museums across the country. The product is there for the taking, and when an exhibit has been done well, from research through fabrication to interpretation, it repays both superficial attention and close examination. Yet no such presentation is possible unless the necessary research is done first, with care, competence and sophistication. All history museums, from small, local historical societies to the Smithsonian Institution, must base their programs on research that is wide ranging in scope and maintains as its central concern the material culture of the American past and the ways in which objects can be used to reflect and amplify our collective experience of four centuries. Material culture is central to such research for the simple reason that museums are, in most basic terms, collections. Artifacts cannot be made to talk, however, nor can the context in which they were made and used be defined from their physical properties. These two facts alone determine to a very large extent the nature and direction of research in museums of history. Such research would seem to have a dual nature—addressing the artifact and the world of which it was once a part.

Yesterday's trash is today's treasure. Excavators in the yard behind a late 18th-century dwelling at Flowerdew Hundred, Virginia, opposite, discover to their delight that the site's ice house was used as a refuse dump in the early 1800s. Above, a visitor to the Joshua Jones House at Strawbery Banke in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, observes a museum archeologist reassemble a piece of pottery.

The study of material culture—all of the ways we have shaped our environment according to a set of culturally shared plans—has long been considered a mere footnote to "true" history or a pursuit better left to collectors or dilettantes. In recent years, however, material culture studies have made dramatic advances in academic respectability. Research and publication by such scholars as Henry Glassie, Thomas Schlereth, John Vlach, Robert St. George and many others have shown that objects have been a little appreciated but important source for a wider and more democratic perspective on early American life. With the arrival of material culture studies as a sophisticated addition to the study of history, we are now witnessing the emergence of a research community within the larger community of history museums.

A recent article in the *Winterthur Portfolio* on earthfast, or post building, a type of construction in the Chesapeake region of the American colonies, is a case in point. Of the five coauthors, three have a museum affiliation: Cary Carson of Colonial Williamsburg, Gary Stone of St. Mary's City and William Kelso of Monticello. That such a publication could not have been prepared 10 years ago is illustrated by the kinds of questions it asks and the manner in which they are addressed. A careful examination of the archeological record for earthfast building establishes dates and geographical distribution. But this impermanent construction is not seen simply as a relatively crude type of building typical of the frontier. The authors place it in an economic context and demonstrate that it reflects a set of attitudes and value system nurtured by single-crop, labor-intensive farming of tobacco. When the economy shifted to mixed-crop farming, the construction of more permanent building structures followed closely behind.

What is important about this study is that it expands on material culture—in this case houses—to arrive at a set of conclusions that would have been difficult to achieve in any other way. What can be done with old houses, or the very tenuous remains of them, can be done with equal effect with the entire range of material culture. This places the history museum in a new and important position in delineating the development of American society. As Robert Friedman has recently observed in *American Heritage*, "Coming at a time when many historians have taken to rewriting history from the bottom up, this new emphasis on archeology as social history would seem to hold great promise." One might just as well read "material culture studies" for "archeology," since archeology, albeit spectacular, is but one of a number of research approaches to the study of the material record of the past.

Object and context, both must be fully addressed in order to do justice to the study of the artifact. Thus the line between pure and applied research in the history museum becomes faint, if ever it was as clearly defined as we might have thought. Aware of the risk of overstatement, I think there is no such thing as too much research on the social, political, religious, legal or economic dimensions of those communities that constructed Georgian houses, turned Brewster chairs, set their tables with white salt-glazed dishes or drove Model-A Fords. The museum cares for these objects as its proper mission, but the interpretation of them rests squarely on a clear and unbiased understanding of the larger, intangible world of which they were a part. Both object and context must be understood. Such an understanding also ensures that we do not project 20th-century perspectives on a time very unlike our own. The linkage of the object with its context must be effected first, through proper research, and only then can both be presented to the public as a coherent whole, where the relationship becomes as important as the object. A delft charger in 1650 was not just another colorful plate from which to take one's dinner; it also served the function—sometimes exclusively—of affirming its owner's social position within the community.

But what of the public, who come to the museum to be educated, entertained, inspired and renewed? Certainly there should be greater efforts made to acquaint visitors with the ways in which we find out about our past. Such efforts are under way here and there around the country. Historic Annapolis has a strong and successful program of interpreting archeological research. Plans at a small and very young history museum at Flowerdew Hundred, Virginia, call for concurrent archeology, construction and interpretation, so that visitors can experience all aspects of the program at the same time. At Flowerdew sites from nearly four centuries are being investigated to form the basis for living history exhibits, spatially separated enclaves covering the period from 1618 to circa 1945. Another outdoor museum embracing almost as long a time period, Strawbery Banke in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, has exhibits that explicitly address the question of research methods and goals and even involve the visitor in the process in a modest but effective way. One section of an exhibit on life in the 19th-century coal-mining town of Somersville, California, at the Lowie Museum, demonstrates how census and voter registration records, newspapers, diaries, oral history, archeology and other types of primary source material have been used to achieve the exhibit's textured and detailed portrayal of the now-vanished community.

Public understanding of the role of research in museum programs is most efficiently accomplished in the context of exhibit-specific interpretation. It is bound to have a salutary effect. Any exhibit stands to benefit from a small "how we found out what we know" section, if for no other reason than to impress on the visitor that the necessarily brief interpretive label has a basis in documented fact—the tip of an iceberg, as it were.

Whether the result of the Bicentennial, or of a new and introspective national mood or of developments in academia at which we might only guess, history museums stand today at a critical and very positive juncture. Research is essential to the achievement of new and exciting goals. Material culture studies are no longer seen in a negative light. The new social history has served to affirm the importance of artifact studies. Historical archeology and those collections of dishes, furniture, old cars, farming tools, musical instruments and every other thing made and used over the centuries are central to our efforts. Small and large, history museums have a new responsibility to carry out the research that will invest their collections with interpretive dimensions little imagined in years past. Δ

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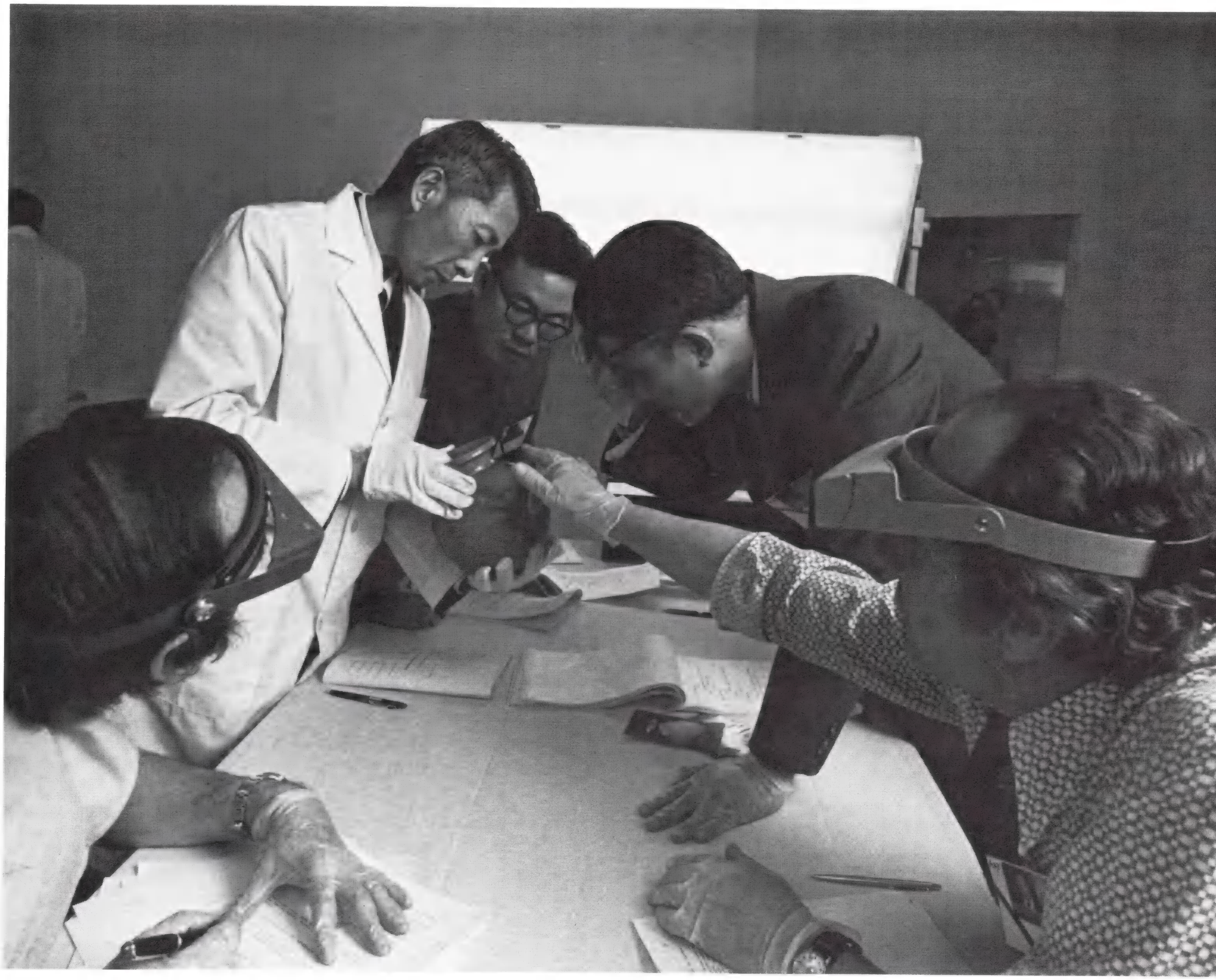
Visual Learning and Art History

PETER C. MARZIO



A vase shipped from China is carefully studied at the National Gallery, Washington, D.C., in preparation for mounting *Archeological Finds from the People's Republic of China* in December 1974.

Art museums are unique educational institutions. In them, learning is visual. Their educational activities, catalogs, video programs and art films all require the services of a well-educated and dedicated staff whose work is based on the ideas and information that result from primary research.

Primary research in art museums is essential for two reasons: it assures the endurance of our institutions, and it strengthens the tradition of art history scholarship. Art museums that make research a priority are interesting places—their objects and collections become well known, information about them is accurate, their curators have ongoing expertise in one or more areas and their professional stature is high.

Art history benefits when museum curators join the ranks of research, for curators often approach fine

Curators examine a carved chair on display as part of *African Art and Motion* at the National Gallery in 1974.

art differently from the way university professors do. Curators live with works of art. They tend to see them as beautiful objects that deserve and demand care, analysis and explanation. University professors are more likely to see art as ideas or visions that deserve to be chronicled. I do not mean to imply exclusivity. Curators deal with ideas, and professors love beautiful objects, but their approaches to research are basically different. Both give important dimensions to art history.

But research is not highly visible, and art museums need high visibility. Positive fund balances, impressive attendance figures and a strong "presence" in community life are requirements that research may not seem directly to serve. Museum staffs are barely large enough to protect the permanent collections, keep the building clean, maintain orderly office routines and files and help the general public enjoy art. Time is short, and funds are limited. Those who read financial statements as ends in themselves are not likely to promote research.

As art museums are forced to become more business oriented in their financial accountability, they have difficulty maintaining a balance. A research project that does not quickly and inexpensively add up to a popular exhibition and catalog may not seem very attractive. Curators and administrators often develop schizophrenic personalities—supporting the idea of research yet knowing too well that a host of other needs may prevent sustained research efforts.

The challenge is to make research attractive and known so that communities will be proud to say that the pursuit of knowledge and the development of stimulating ideas make their art museum an important generator of reliable information and a standard bearer for lasting esthetic values. Recently the Henry R. Luce Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation have determined to support primary art history research in museums. Perhaps these major commitments will lead the way to a renewed commitment to the research function among us all.

Art museums, both large and small, can institute and follow policies that will reward high quality research, particularly research that is sustained over a long period of time. Some ways of achieving this are obvious:

- hire administrators who understand the importance of research and try to make budgets fit research goals;
- include research skills as a priority in curatorial job descriptions and hire curators who want to do research and to write;
- establish curatorial salary review standards that put research on an equal footing with collecting and collections management, administration and community and educational service; and
- establish an outside review procedure for all articles, catalogs, monographs and books published by the museum to assure a high degree of accuracy and originality and a high quality of writing and presentation.

I do not believe that art museums should become research institutes or study centers; they should remain the centers for visual learning that they are. But research must take its place alongside other important functions. Even small art museums should do their part. The specter of a few large museums providing the new information based on research is not very attractive. The talents of all art museum professionals should be enlisted in our research efforts. Δ

The Obligation of Collecting

THOMAS D. NICHOLSON

An icthyologist at the American Museum of Natural History examines a fish skeleton.

It may be true—and I assume it is—that every museum need not maintain collections. But I think it is also true that some museums must. I am led to that conviction by observing many kinds of museums the world over. While there may be exceptions, museums are collection-oriented institutions. Their collections, in my opinion, obligate them in turn to other things. Just as a warehouse full of books isn't always a library, a building full of material objects is not necessarily a museum. The difference in both cases is a program for using the objects in the public good to achieve certain educational, cultural and recreational goals.

For those museums that have them, collections are at once their greatest asset and their greatest liability. As an asset, the strength, quality, representation and diversity of the collections control the quality of the museum and its programs. But they are costly, those collections, and therein lies their liability. They need continual care to keep from deteriorating into worthless junk; they must be protected and guarded for their shockingly increasing monetary values; and we all know what's happening to the salaries and expenses of the curators, educators, technicians and preparators who are responsible for preserving, exhibiting, interpreting and studying them. Those of us

In an exhibits office, opposite, a reptile receives the final touches before going on exhibition, while below, museum workers concentrate on casting a stegosaurus replica for the Osaka Museum in Japan.

in museums that enjoy the rewards of having great collections are reaping an abundant harvest of rising costs for what our predecessors sowed when they brought these precious things to us!

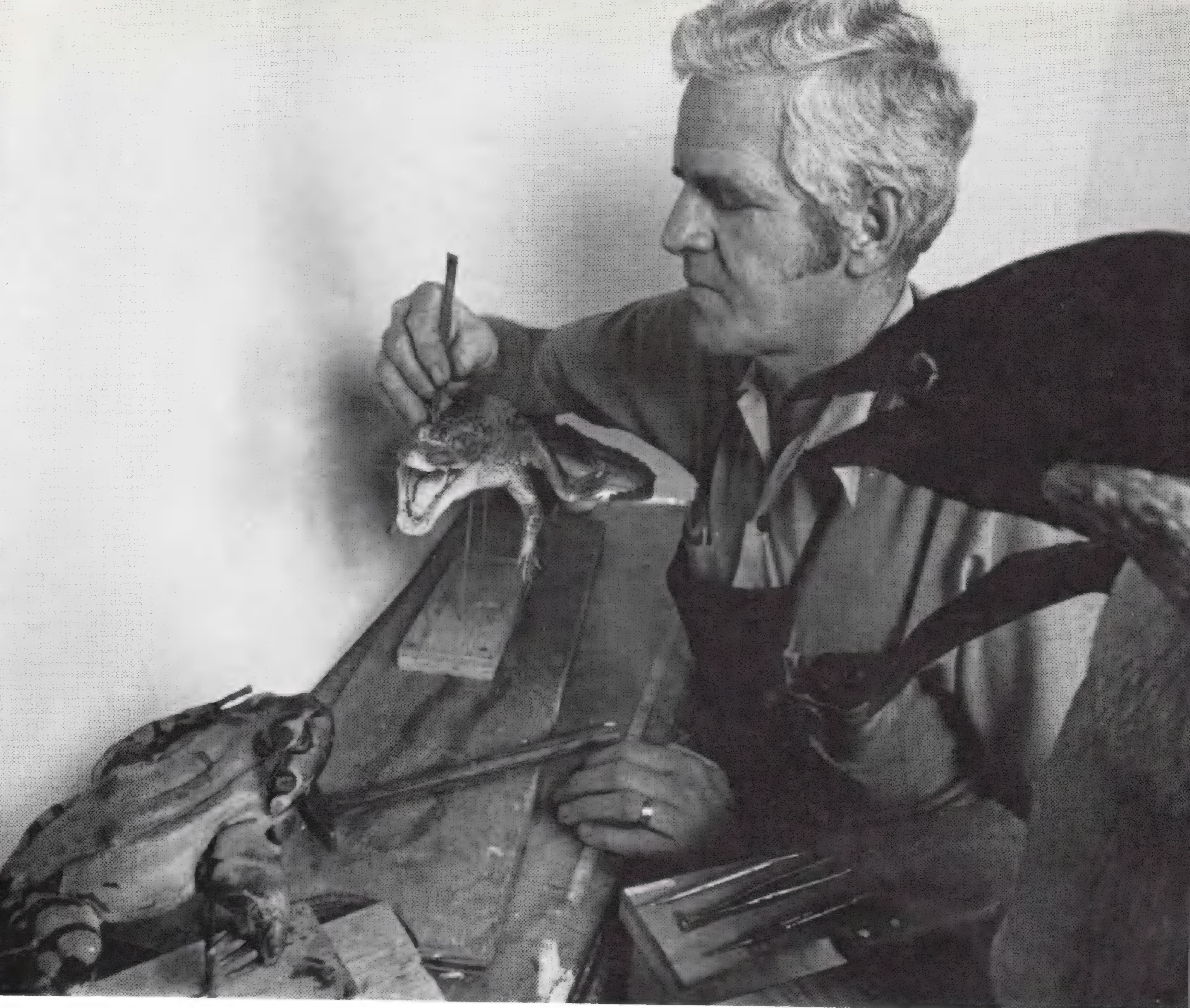
But we really don't have much choice. Collections are what we are all about, at least some of us, and they bring us great rewards and heavy obligations. The rewards, if my observations and experiences have any validity, are rich in the scope, quality and diversity of the programs that great collections make possible, for it is great collections that make museums great. The obligations stem from the single and inescapable conclusion that, having these marvelous materials, we must protect, preserve and use them for the public good. If we don't, we will soon hear the heavy breathing of trustees, and possibly states' attorneys general, catching up behind us, and we may find ourselves lonely in a world full of potential benefactors, public and private. We cannot simply limit ourselves to protecting and preserving our collections. What a wonderfully secure and inexpensive world ours would be if we could just seal them hermetically in a fortress and forget them! But we must exhibit them, permit and encourage their study by students and scholars, lend them to colleagues and other institutions and derive from them such evidence as we can concerning what they are and how and why they came into being. With proper safeguards, of course, but that's why we have them.

The obligation to promote and support the use of collections in scholarly research rests particularly heavily on natural history museums. Their collections are the material evidence of the earth's living creatures, past and present, of the life style practiced by its human inhabitants and of its structure and evolution, and these are all things that people want to know something about—not just scientists but people of all kinds. Natural history museums were founded to collect this material for the express purpose of learning what they could from it (research) and of passing on this information to society (exhibition and education). They have always recognized parallel obligations to identify, classify and preserve the objects they collect; to exhibit and interpret them to the public; and to derive from them knowledge about the environment in which they were produced and used.

In order to be sure that these mutually interdependent responsibilities and their related functions are carried out to satisfactory standards of quality, natural history museums have traditionally employed trained and experienced scholars as curators. Experience has shown that such persons, in fields appropriate to the museum's interests, are the best guarantee that the collections will be properly organized, maintained, preserved and used. It is in their own professional interests to do so. These curators are also vitally concerned that exhibits accurately represent the objects displayed and their significance; their authority is the best guarantee of the museum's competence in exhibition and education; and they are best able to control the loan of collections for exhibition or study purposes and the use of collections by visiting students and scholars.

Employment of trained scholars as curators involves an interesting feedback situation. While the effective maintenance and use of our collections require us to employ such persons as curators, their employment in turn obligates us to build and maintain the collections (as essential tools of their work) and to support collection-oriented research (the kind of work our curators were trained to do) in order to interest them and keep them in our institutions. Their professional reputations will ultimately depend on the quality and significance of their research and publication, and we must support them in these goals if we are to exploit their talents for other museum needs. But it is in our best interest to do so, because those needs include the very things that our curators are trained to do, and that the museum is obligated to do.

Natural history museums are now the principal centers for certain kinds of collection-based research.



They are heavily committed to the support of research on whole organ biology, paleontology, the mineral sciences and the study of traditional human cultures through material evidence. Once strong and vigorous fields in university-supported research, they are no longer so because of shifting interests and priorities in the universities. As a result, university collections in zoology, paleontology, botany, mineralogy and ethnology have declined sharply during the past several decades, concentrating the collections resources needed for such kinds of research, and the research itself, more and more in museums.

The kind of research appropriately supported in museums has raised interesting questions. One is the temptation to "follow the money" by encouraging research more likely to qualify for research support. This may mean research in what are currently more fashionable lines of investigation, more popular with granting agencies. It may also involve accepting or seeking contracts to do applied research of particular benefit to the funding agency. In some cases, this could lead the museum into lines of work that it would not otherwise do. There is nothing wrong with that, provided the research is relevant to the museum's own interests and those of its staff. Many natural history museums today find partial support for their research from contracts to do environmental impact studies and other floral and faunal surveys for governmental agencies and even for private corporations. Excessive reliance on contract- and grant-supported research can, however, provoke instability in the museum's staff, lead the museum into lines of

research that are inappropriate or far-removed from its institutional goals and raise conflicts of interest between the museum and funding sources, especially when proprietary kinds of information are involved.

The other side of the same argument is, of course, that museums cannot afford, in a world of increasing scientific complexity, sophistication and specialization, to become isolated from the mainstream of current science, to disregard current views of relevance, to ignore opportunities to adopt their scientific work to the interests of funding sources or to neglect modern scientific methodology and tools in their work. It is important to this concern that we examine and identify our scientific goals and strategy in the interest of keeping and building our strength and respect in the scientific community while still carrying out the roles in science that we are best equipped to undertake.

In resolving these points of view, we are very much aware that the research opportunities available in the natural history museums of the United States are relatively few—several hundred at most—as compared to tens of thousands in universities, government agencies and public and private research facilities. We cannot compete to any great degree with this vast research enterprise in fields it has chosen to pursue. This suggests that we should identify the research we are best equipped to do, by nature as well as by interest, and do it as well as we can, rather than dilute our impact on scientific research through excessive diversification. It suggests also that, in light of the finite opportunities we can offer, we cannot afford any that do not contribute importantly to our goals. Every player must count, because we have so few.

That our research is collection based does not mean that it must be collection limited. We justify the support of research by the need to use collections effectively. The scope of research we support is governed to a degree by the scope of our collections, which reflects the objectives of the museum. While these factors play a strong role in determining our research strategies, they do not imply that our scientific goals are limited to what we can learn from the collections themselves. The collections in natural history museums are evidence of the diversity that pervades the earth, its living things and the behavior of its human societies. This leads us to recognize systematics re-

search—the task of identifying and classifying the materials of nature—as a fundamental field of interest for which we are particularly well equipped by our collections and our concern for them. This interest, in turn, leads us to examine the process of diversity itself, its characteristics and the forces that produce it. Necessarily, this takes us into the environment where the collections are found in order to identify factors that control their distribution, the relationships among their many variants and the principles that give rise to and determine their similarities and differences. Finally, we are concerned with the broader implications and relevance in our work for science and society generally. In this process, while recognizing that we cannot afford our research efforts to become too diluted from our institutional goals, we encourage our curators to take novel and sophisticated approaches to their work, and we employ curators with special training and interests when we find that their skills and approaches will lead to new insights into our work.

The strong emphasis on research in natural history museums underscores the fundamental difference in the collections strategy as compared to other museums. Natural history specimens are collected primarily for what they can tell us about the world we live in and about the conditions under which they were produced or used. In this sense, every specimen in a collection has significance and meaning, for their differences and similarities are the evidence we seek. Aside from the specimen itself, its most important characteristics are the circumstances in which it was obtained and the research reports of investigators who have studied it. Every specimen is unique; there are really no duplicates. Depending on the kinds of work being done, one specimen may be enough or several hundred may not be, and no one can predict accurately the needs, relevance and trends of tomorrow's science. So we collect for representation, and we collect as many as we can find, carry with us, prepare and house in the facilities and with the support at hand. And even then we will collect some more while the opportunity exists, cramming it away in the hope that eventually we may be able to cope with it, because the opportunity may be gone tomorrow. Ninety-nine percent or more of the collections in natural history will never be seen by the public, nor were they meant to be. They were gathered and are maintained for the student and scholar, who will use them as evidence to uncover the history of the earth, its living things and its human societies.

The "care and feeding" of collections in natural history museums, as a result of their collection strategy and their heavy emphasis on research, are very expensive. Not uncommonly, these functions require

Opposite, a preparator directs the dismantling and reproduction of a Triceratops skeleton. Below, scientists in an icthyology lab dissect a coelacanth, a primitive fish.

a third or more of the available space in the museum. Storage cabinets, drawers, boxes, preservatives and insecticides are surprisingly costly (about \$15 to \$20 per cubic foot for storage furniture alone). A new 80,000-cubic-foot storage area recently built at the American Museum of Natural History cost about \$700,000 to construct (in renovated space), and its storage equipment will cost about \$1.2 million! Finally, costs for the scientific and technical staff required to maintain and use the research collections may account for one-third of its annual program operating budget, two-thirds of its annual program costs.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the support of their research collections and their research is a major burden for natural history museums, way out of proportion to what we may find in other kinds of museums. But as I suggested earlier, these activities are also assets and bring rich rewards. Audience surveys show that our visiting public recognizes and respects the scientific authority of our museum, as well as its quality and effectiveness as an exhibition, educational and community service agency. Natural history museums are strongly perceived as scientific, as well as educational, cultural and recreational institutions, and this is a decided asset in raising funds, not only in support of research itself but for the museum and its program as a whole. The quality and relevance of our research turn out to be very strong arguments for support by the public and private sectors alike. Δ

Method as Message

Interpreting the Past with the Public

MARK P. LEONE

Museums are becoming more introspective institutions. They have long done research on their collections; more recently they have studied who their audiences are and, with the Commission on Museums for a New Century, what their national image is and what their future may be. But they have not yet paid much attention to what they educate about or how successful they are at it. Obviously there is some analysis,[1] but the critique is rarely sufficiently sustained to equal the important role museums play in teaching history. In museum education we are dealing with one of the major alternatives to the breakdown of the American public school system,[2] for museums organize primary materials and make them available at little cost to the whole population. Yet how museums get their messages across is not well understood. More serious, we truly do not know what those messages are—their intellectual bases and their impact. This is not a relationship that works productively for us.

There is, however, a small but forceful critique of museum settings that comes out of radical history and attempts to place the museum's lesson in a larger cultural context.[3] These studies, which focus on the factors in the living social environment of the museum in order to understand how messages are composed, amount to the ethnography of museums. They concentrate not on the cultural context of the manufacture and use of objects and artifacts but on how these are given meaning in the display setting. The basic assumption underlying all these studies is that the meaning of the past is derived largely (but not solely) from the present and that—scientific accuracy and appropriateness of analogy aside—this relationship can make the past appear to be parallel to the present. The phenomenon is called *presentism* in historiography; *projection,* which is the basis for historical narcissism, in psychoanalysis; and *ideology* in Marxist theory. The vernacular and unanalytical version of this important 19th-century insight is that each generation sees the past differently: "We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are."[4] This means that we do not see the past as it appeared to those who lived in it. We see it somewhat polarized by present-day interests and insights.[5]

A critique of objectivity accompanying the investigation of the role of the present in shaping the meaning of the past has already been established in the sociology of science. The overextended use of Thomas S. Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in understanding the impact of culture on science has given way to complementary observations which show that "what scientists observe and explain is pretty much entirely created in the process of mundane laboratory manipulations, these latter being designed (unawares) to serve the ends of scientists engaged in internal power struggles."[6] Such conclusions show the limits of the scientific method. The studies do not aim at weakening science but at questioning the privileged status too frequently accorded the scientific method. Their goal is to strengthen rational exploration through self-reflection and critical analysis.

One of the keys to understanding the social function of history museums may be in understanding method. If much of our knowledge of the past is derived from the present, awareness of the sources of knowledge (method) provides the public (museum visitors) with the freedom of seeing and the possibility of challenging conventional conclusions about the past. One of the points of the museum process can become exhibiting method rather than conclusions, the process of knowing rather than the results of research.

Georg Lukacs in particular has argued that history serves other interests and is never neutral. And this is inevitable, not a deliberate misrepresentation at the hands of certain people or institutions. History is always a presentation of the present to itself; he argues that it is always a symbolic construction for political or economic ends. The present composes a version of its wishes and places them in a separate, seemingly objectified past. One antidote is a keen awareness of the process.[7] Even though Lukacs overstates the relationship, museums can provide the antidote. Demon-

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Archeologists at the Victualling Warehouse site early in the summer of 1982 talked informally to visitors about their work and were happy to answer questions.

strating the research process through exhibits emphasizing logic rather than objects and discoveries enfranchises people with the means to see for themselves how pasts are composed, how their history has been shaped by the present to form, in fact, their own identity. This demonstration would enable people to distinguish between misrepresentations of the past and more accurate histories that are still a part of the environment of their times.

All this reasoning about the role of research in museum presentations of the past was in place before Historic Annapolis, Inc., and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland, College Park, began a collaborative archeological project in Annapolis, an 18th-century city with a largely unexplored archeological record. Historic Annapolis, the 31-year-old private preservation organization responsible for saving and maintaining the historic fabric of the city, wanted to avoid fossilizing the living town as a museum village, and its decision was fully backed by the archeologists. The emphasis of the museum message was to be on method.

From the beginning of the project in 1982 most of the excavation sites were open or visible to the public. We used what we called self-directed tours. Visitors were welcome to observe and ask questions, and we made it clear to our students and staff that they should offer explanations. We reasoned that if people got their questions answered, they would leave satisfied and knowing more. But after the first month it was apparent that we could not create a proper educational experience for the visiting public at a dig without a serious effort by the archeologists to speak about their work in a way that they—and indeed many museum researchers—are not normally required to do. In fact, we quickly realized that visitors were fascinated with the archeology but did not know how to get their questions out or even what questions to ask. The archeologists, for their part, were willing to talk but could not answer such questions as, How did it get so deeply buried? Why isn't it more deeply buried? Is it this way all over Annapolis? How much does this digging cost? What did you find today? These are all reasonable questions, but some had no answers yet and other answers came only with a technical lingo that produced puzzled looks. While we had sorted out the theory about giving the public access to history by explaining method, we did not know how to go about it.

Much of the funding for our public presentation of archeological method came from two grants in 1982 and 1983 from the Maryland Committee for the Humanities (now the Maryland Humanities Council), which early on recognized the need for a media specialist who could link our archeologists to visitors in a way that went beyond the satisfaction of mere curiosity. Over the course of two summers and many winter meetings, a twofold training process emerged that in the end produced a good educational tour. Philip Arnoult, director of the Theatre Project of Baltimore and creator of *Baltimore Voices,* listened to what there was at an ongoing archeological site that could be presented to the public, and he took our content, professional staff and students and created the structure for a 15-minute tour that archeologists could give on demand to visitors.

Arnoult asked us first to make a list of what people who visited the sites wanted to know. Then he asked us how they perceived archeologists as well as the value judgments they brought with them. We summarized that people wanted to know what we were doing, what we were looking for, what we found today that was interesting, how long we had been digging, how can we tell how old things are, why dig here as opposed to somewhere else, were there any coins or tunnels, were there any treasures or old Indian materials, what were our reconstruction plans, what were we paid and could they touch. They perceived us as antiquarians, adventurers, washouts, detectives, foreigners, Annapolitans. Alternately they wanted the extraordinary, were uninterested in ceramics, wondered about the connection to classical archeology, wanted to know how we could be so patient and/

or waste so much time, speculated on the tie to history and geography, asked if it wasn't in the documents already and if there was something they could read. Our responses to these questions included that we wanted to prevent speculation from becoming fact, that talking to the public was a pleasure, that it was a waste of time.

Arnoult worked with those of us who were interested to create the structure of the tour. The structure was based on immediacy: the subject was archeological procedure, not the past; the tour guide was an excavator or site supervisor, not a costumed individual reenacting anything. The tour was designed to allow professionals to communicate how they think about what they do, with no talking down, no lingo and no acting. Some of the tour's content changed from day to day as new squares were opened; parts of it, like the questions we were asking of the site, stayed the same. In other words, we tried to make the tour content match the dynamic character of any dig. There is no doubt that archeology at the public site went more slowly, but at the same time archeologists gave eight to 12 tours a day to 100 people or more.

The tour began with the archeologist introducing himself or herself, then moved to an area being excavated in order to explain equipment, note taking, the grid and the layering in the ground. A feature about which we were coming to a tentative conclusion was explained—a wall, a burned level, a semicircular row of bricks that was tentatively called a cistern. During 1982 the guides would say,

> You can see that this wall is three bricks wide, which we know from standing buildings can support no more than two and one-half stories. And those are the joist pockets. From their spacing and from those burned floor boards, which will tell us species of wood, we can tell how heavy a load the building could carry. So we use inferences, based on how buildings are still built, to draw a hunch about the look of this one from the late 1700s.

The chief sponsors were identified, the $50,000 raised for the project acknowledged and then questions were entertained. Often there was spontaneous applause; always there were lots of good, articulate, challenging questions from the very audience that 15 minutes earlier could not get them out. The enthusiasm of the visitors created a rapport with the archeologists and allowed them to explain their work in greater detail and to their own greater satisfaction. In addition, midway through the second summer the archeologists were convinced that having to explain the site improved their own understanding of their work.

With visitors, the tour of the open site was popular; 7,000 people toured the Victualling Warehouse dig in the summer and fall of 1982. During the winter Mayor Donald Schaefer of Baltimore set up a similar

Using what they had learned from informal interaction with visitors, archeologists and Philip Arnoult, director of the Theatre Project of Baltimore, created the basic structure of a more formal tour and critiqued training sessions on a closed site.

program to attract visitors from Baltimore's Inner Harbor redevelopment to an adjacent historic area. Here and during the second summer of excavation in Annapolis we had a chance to make our ideas work better. The process of training became more explicit. We even began to identify the elements that made for successful tours based on ongoing research at excavation sites:

- the people doing the research must regard education as important as the research itself;
- the tour must have a structure; and
- there must be a convincing tie to the present drawn out of the material from the past.

Imbedded in the first element is the assumption that archeology for the public as information, education or critical awareness is justified through the theory that the present is a large source of knowledge of the past. This theory is fundamentally opposed to the notion that the past can speak for itself or that everyone can read clearly the lessons of history. It holds that the past is very hard to read and is frequently misread or even misused. Once this relationship between the past and the present is understood, the plasticity of the past can be grasped. Archeological reasoning—the method itself—becomes the vehicle for giving people access as to how data from the past are made into history. No one acting as a role player can ever achieve this; only a live, 20th-century, dirty excavator.

The tour structure must be established and some of its content set, but it must be adjustable to a normal dig and to the individuality of the archeologists, including those who do not like or understand some of the interpretation. There must be enough leeway for someone to say, "I'm not sure about this myself, but here's what they're saying about this site now. . . ." The parts of the tour and the general path across the site must be agreed on or the content will not have a base; people cannot be spontaneous 20 times a day.

The conclusion of the tour, which must contain a statement about the present that is drawn from work on the site, is the most difficult to produce. The conclusion for the 1983 tour for the Victualling Warehouse in Annapolis:

> The burned level you see in the wall of this square was produced by a fire that we know swept this whole block of buildings in 1790. It burned three warehouses, two of which were rebuilt. This lower level here shows the remains of a third. The level just above it is 20 years newer but contains the same structural remains, and we think the burned-out shell of the warehouse was allowed to stand here on the City Dock for two decades unused before it was pushed over, forming this upper level. We conclude from this that Annapolis waterfront property had lost some of its value by 1790 or was put to other uses. We know that by the end of the century, Baltimore had become Queen of the Chesapeake, drawing off enterprising people and many businesses from Annapolis. These levels represent the beginning of a change that saw Annapolis become a smaller, more local economy than it had been before. It was less international and generated less of its own wealth. During that century and a half, Annapolis did have periods of prosperity. All the while it enjoyed romantic novels of its golden age—the 1760s—or it sometimes tore its heritage down for immediate economic gain and forgot it.
>
> So we think there are two lessons to be learned from this site. One is about the commercial changes in Annapolis late in the 1700s. But our work is also part of

In contrast to the Annapolis sites, the Great Baltimore Brewery Dig is wide open. Tents provide essential shade as well as site definition, and the development of the industrial skyline, with buildings from 1820 to 1983, is the subject of the tour.

the city's recovery of its commercial life. Just as a small group of local families ran Annapolis for a century and a half, from 1800 to 1950, and deliberately forgot some parts of the past or romanticized others, now newer commercial and business people use the business history of Annapolis, which is what we're creating here at this site, to ground their own place in the community. And so the second lesson is that communities take an interest in their own history according to their current circumstances.

The conclusion for the tour in Baltimore:

The foundations of the brewery's malthouse in this trench show a specialized building from the early 1800s. We know that by the 1870s all the specialized functions in the brewery were contained in one large five-story building. You can see examples of the evolution of Baltimore's industrial architecture all around you here. In front of you is the Shot Tower, a 200-foot tower from which molten lead was dropped to make rifle shot. It's a very specialized building, like the early buildings on this site. Behind you is the Scarlett Seed Company, which dates to the 1870s. It is a big shell used to house a whole host of machines, just like the brewery building here, of the same period, did. To your left that gray factory from the early 20th century is the next stage. It's modular and all the spaces in it are equal. It was built empty and designed so that almost any manufacturing process could fit into it. And those skyscrapers in front of you—from the famous Bromo Seltzer Tower to the big new ones—all the spaces in those are modular too. So you can see here that we've gone from specialized factory buildings in one spot run by different, skilled people to big generalized buildings where people and skills are a lot more interchangeable.

These tours, which are grounded in archeology and given by archeologists who are anthropologists, have—at the least—eliminated criticism of archeology as exclusive, arcane or incomprehensible. If done right, they can eliminate criticisms of irrelevance or unnecessary expense as well. While none of this exposure compromises scientific method and rigorous field procedure, it educates while it fosters community self-esteem, economic development and historic preservation.

Putting the research process on display for the public has another benefit, one that is just beginning for us. Data are being gathered from visitors on the ideas about the past they bring with them. If a community's perception of its own past includes an awareness of how interpretation of history is achieved, it is protected to a degree from attempts to misuse the past.

Tour Given by Parker B. Potter, Jr., Summer 1983

"Welcome to the Victualling Warehouse archeological site.

I am Parker Potter, graduate student at Brown University; historical archeologist; worked here last summer.

Forty of us do archeology in Annapolis; professional archeologists, graduate students, undergraduates, local volunteers.

Sponsors include Historic Annapolis, City of Annapolis, Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland, Maryland Humanities Council.

Our goal is to understand 18th-century commerce and economics, so we're digging many sites; a blacksmith shop, tavern, printshop, upper-class home; here: a warehouse.

The Victualling Warehouse: two warehouses built in 1748, used by Americans during the Revolution for victuals (food); both burned in 1790; one rebuilt during 1820s; today houses Maritime Museum and our archeology lab; other warehouse not rebuilt is our site.

(Move into site)

Techniques: same as most archeology sites; simple tools: trowels and shovels; dirt sifted; artifacts put in bags (one per level in a hole); maps, notes, photos taken; artifacts washed, labeled, cataloged in lab (three hours lab work per hour of digging); reports written.

(Move to square with stratigraphy)

This hole has two layers of rubble: one burned, one unburned, both from the destruction of the same warehouse.

Using the *Maryland Gazette* and ceramic dates, we have pinpointed the fire to 1790.

But ceramic pieces in the burned layer are 20 years older than those in the unburned layer above.

Therefore, the warehouse on this portion of the property was not rebuilt, and in fact the archeology shows that the land was not built on again until after 1900.

This signals an economic change in Annapolis. By 1800, Annapolis no longer had an expanding economy, and even though the town grew in the last century, aggressive new commerce and industry did not flourish again until about 1950.

During 1800-1950, historical novels and popular histories of Annapolis focused on politics and the golden age of the 1760s and ignored the post-1800 period.

About 1950, as the economy was reborn, there was new interest in commercial aspects of the city's history.

Before the rebirth, commercial history included the story of decline and had little interest for Annapolitans; after 1950, commerce was the story of success.

So, the history of commerce provides historical grounding and political legitimacy for the commercial success you see in Annapolis today.

Our archeological work is very much tied up with the commercial rebirth of the city. We are creating a kind of history that speaks to the people of present-day Annapolis in a way that would not have happened 30 years ago—and who is to say what aspects of the town's history will elicit greater interest 30 years from now?

Our message: interest in the history of a community is affected, if not governed, by present-day circumstances. People like to see a connection—even if through contrast—between past and present.

We hope that by showing you how history is created—in the eyes of the present—we have given you ways to see the history of Annapolis and other places with new, more critical eyes."

Further, through an awareness of method, museums can have an impact on the choices the community can make about itself.

What is the past for Annapolis, and how does it get created, sustained, used? How do living but deeply rooted American communities forget, relive, discover, change, celebrate, compose their pasts into histories? These questions lead to the ethnography of history, a study of how America uses history that we must undertake in order to comprehend what historical interpretation at a museum or historic site has to offer.

Some of this comes out in what people say after a tour, which the archeologists have been recording. But much more will be gathered in ethnographic work throughout the community in 1983-84, in which we will attempt to describe Annapolis' historical sense of self and its concrete uses of its past. This work will be a baseline for the issue that is our largest concern: whether an awareness of the symbolic construction of the past can be achieved and, if it can, what difference that will make in the way a community safeguards its historical resources, including their role in its modern identity. This baseline will allow us to understand the environment of our work.

We already know that people come to visit us, parents teach their children what we teach them at our sites, people bring their friends and give up their time to dig and do lab work. In this we demystify our role. We plan to make a multiprojector slide show and prepare a walking map and guidebook based on explaining how the past is created and recreated in Annapolis and how the past, in general, is always a function of the present view. Even so, it is too early to judge how much a difference we make by explaining our work. Because the museum is a function of its community but normally denies that this relationship affects the intellectual integrity of its message, no measure for evaluation has been created. But if we can understand how a cultural environment creates a history museum's message, then that discovery, explained in a museum, may unify institution, researcher and the visiting community. Δ

Notes

This article was read and substantially improved by Philip Arnoult, Parker Potter, St. Clair Wright and Arthur Pierce Middleton. Jo Blatti of the New York Council for the Humanities provided citations that opened the world of museum evaluation to me. Elizabeth Anderson, city archeologist for the Office of the Mayor of Baltimore, cooperated closely.

1. Cary Carson, "Living Museums of Everyman's History," *Harvard Magazine* (July/August 1981): 22-32; Thomas J. Schlereth, "It Wasn't That Simple," *Museum News* 56, no. 3 (January/February 1978): 36-44; Rudolph Baranik, Sarina Bromberg and Sarah Charlesworth, *an anti-catalog* (New York: Catalog Committee of Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, 1977).

2. Elliot Willensky, personal communication, 1983.

3. Russell G. Handsman, "The Domains of Kinship and Settlement in Historic Goshen: Signs of a Past Cultural Order," *Artifacts* 9, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 1980): 1, 4-7; Handsman, "Early Capitalism and the Center Village of Canaan, Connecticut," *Artifacts* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 1-22; Handsman, "Historical Archaeology and Capitalism, Subscriptions and Separations: The Production of Individualism," *North American Archaeologist* 4, no. 1 (1983): 63-79; Handsman, "Towards Archeological Histories of Robbins Swamp," *Artifacts* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1983): 1-20; Mark P. Leone, "Archaeology's Relationship to the Present and the Past," in *Modern Material Culture: The Archeology of Us,* ed. Richard A. Gould and Michael B. Schiffer (New York: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 5-14; Leone, "The Relationship between Artifacts and the Public in Outdoor History Museums," in *The Research Potential of Anthropological Museum Collections,* ed. Anne-Marie Cantwell, James B. Griffin and Nan A. Rothschild (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1981), pp. 301-13; David J. Meltzer, "Ideology and Material Culture," in *Modern Material Culture,* ed. Gould and Schiffer, pp. 113-25; Carmel Schrire, "Hunter-Gatherers in Africa," *Science* 210 (November 21, 1980): 890-91; Schrire, "Variations on an Ecotone: Land Use and Identity in the Past and Present," paper read at the Third International Conference on Hunter-Gatherers, Bad Homberg, Federal Republic of Germany, June 13-16, 1983; Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past," *Radical History Review* 25 (1981): 63-96.

4. David Pilbeam, "Issue of Male-Female Aggressiveness Is a Scientific Buzz Saw," *Washington Post,* August 5, 1983, sec. A, p. 3.

5. This point has been made by Bernard Fontana, who was probably the first to point out that 18th-century Williamsburg did not have a model of itself at an earlier stage within it. The same point has been made and demonstrated in other ways by John Cotter, "Colonial Williamsburg," *Technology and Culture* 11 (1970): 417-27; James F. Deetz, "The Historic House Museum: Can It Live?" *Historic Preservation* 23, no. 1 (January/March 1971): 51-54; Ivor Noel Hume, *A Guide to Historic Artifacts of Colonial America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976). When aimed at Plimoth Plantation, this critique has been made forcefully by Richard Schechner, "Restoration of Behavior," *Studies in Visual Communication* 7 (Summer 1981): 2-45. Jonathan Yardley's recent "The America That Never Was" (*Washington Post,* May 30, 1983, sec. D, pp. 1, 8) and the responses it elicited (ibid., June 4, 1983, sec. A, p. 17) show how commonly available but how upsetting such analyses have become.

6. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Alison Wylie, personal communication, 1983.

7. See, in particular, Georg Lukacs, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 83-222. See also Jay Anderson, "Living History: Simulating Everyday Life in Living Museums," *American Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1982): 290-306; Schechner, "Restoration of Behavior"; and J. W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), pp. 297-98, all of whom argue that reading, writing, telling, presenting and performing history are active and form modern opinion, modern nationality, modern identity, class interests and social position.

No Longer the Hidden Agenda

Research Goes Public

LORIN I. NEVLING, JR.

In the late 1970s the Field Museum surveyed a segment of its members to determine, among other things, their perceptions of the museum. We were startled to learn that they did not perceive us as a research institution. This was especially disquieting because for years we had made a large investment in annual members' nights at which members had access to both collection and research areas. Members also receive a monthly bulletin that often features articles on museum research. Despite these efforts—and despite the fact that the Field is one of the major research institutions of its kind in the world and its collections recognized by discipline-oriented societies as national research resources—our members simply did not think of research as one of our major functions.

Research is, in fact, a museum's almost hidden agenda. If the heart of a museum is its collections,[1] those collections must be arranged in some sort of order; that responsibility, in turn, commits the museum to research. Yet the public is largely unaware of museum research, and even the museum community itself does not routinely acknowledge it. The American Association of Museums does not recognize, even informally, the research museum as a special category.[2]

In a research museum as much as one-third or more of the total budget might be allocated to collection and research costs. A very small percentage of the collections—the tip of the iceberg—may be on exhibit. Much of the museum's activity is out of public sight. The amount of collection-oriented research carried on by museum scholars is less than that carried out on museum collections by colleagues outside the museum. Research museums are net lenders of collections; they are major supporters of the research effort of the nation.

The public reputation of a museum, however, is generally local and based primarily on its exhibits and educational programming. These are the functions that directly involve the museum's visitors. A museum engaged in basic, or pure, research may have a national or international scholarly reputation, but

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its visitors perceive it as identical to the museum that does only summative research, that is, pulling together previously documented information on a subject to present an exhibition or a public program.

Obviously, it costs a lot more to *do* research than to *talk* about it. Before our current era of economic stress, however, research museums showed little concern over whether their visitors knew the full extent of what went on behind the scenes. Recently, with financial support from federal granting agencies dwindling and private support slow in forthcoming, research museums are increasingly concerned about their reputations with a variety of funding sources. Despite the fact that they are enormously more expensive to operate, they have no fund-raising edge over museums that are not committed to basic research. At the same time, the costs of maintaining open-ended excellence in basic research are increasing. Many research institutions would find the financial burden of basic research intolerable were it not for the keen sense of responsibility to the collections and to their use through research and the public programs of education and exhibition. It is time that research museums integrate research into their public programs, too, and that they make themselves known to their local publics as research institutions.

A botanist at the Field Museum of Natural History, opposite, examines photographs of pollen grains and specimens from the South American sunflower family. Above, a mammalogist measures wart hog teeth.

How do you go about portraying the research function of a museum? Some museums have attempted to highlight the results of research through the media, but basic research has proved to be a very difficult commodity to "sell" to the media on a continuing basis. The larger the collection the more likely it is to be worldwide in scope and the museum's curator-scholars to be studying in remote areas. A small museum staff working locally often receives more coverage in the media than a large museum with a large staff working internationally.

At the Field Museum we tried, several years ago, to put our research before the public. To celebrate the museum's 75th anniversary, an exhibit was devel-

oped around three major themes: a sense of wonder, a sense of history and a sense of discovery. The "discovery" component, which addressed museum-based research, proved the most difficult for the public to understand.

Shortly thereafter a new administrative level was introduced to oversee the museum's three programmatic departments—science (the research function), education and exhibition. This was a pivotal intellectual and organizational step because it forced the issue of programmatic cohesiveness internally and set the stage for future change. A Program Planning and Evaluation Committee composed of trustees and staff likewise fostered thoughtful consideration about the appropriate relationship among functions and mission.

A flow chart was developed to illustrate how museum interrelationships work and define how scientific research, education and exhibition relate to one another. Research—the heart of the matter—was placed in the museum context in an easily understandable way. Researchers, the curator-scholars, represent all of us in the human quest for knowledge about ourselves and the world around us. These scholars are not only the historians of the working world; they use research as a tool to predict interconnections past, present and future. Each generation of scholars adds to the data in particular fields, accumulating, and thus increasing, knowledge and understanding. Scholars develop a specialized technical language as they organize and study various collections; they share their knowledge through scholarly, peer publications such as our journal *Fieldiana.*

The role of museum educators and exhibit designers is to "translate" this specialized language into terms that will foster visitors' understanding, perception and appreciation. Museum educators develop and present a variety of programs that differ in depth and scope to involve a diverse, lifelong-learning audience. Exhibit designers, working with educators and scholars, provide the visual interpretation by presenting objects and text in ways that attract and involve the visitors' attention.

The flow chart correctly ordered the programmatic departments, as does the museum's new statement of purpose. This effort coincided with the museum's commitment to provide accessibility to its physical facilities, programs and employment. Intellectual accessibility became the next issue to be addressed, and it seemed logical that the research message and intellectual accessibility could be combined into an orientation center.

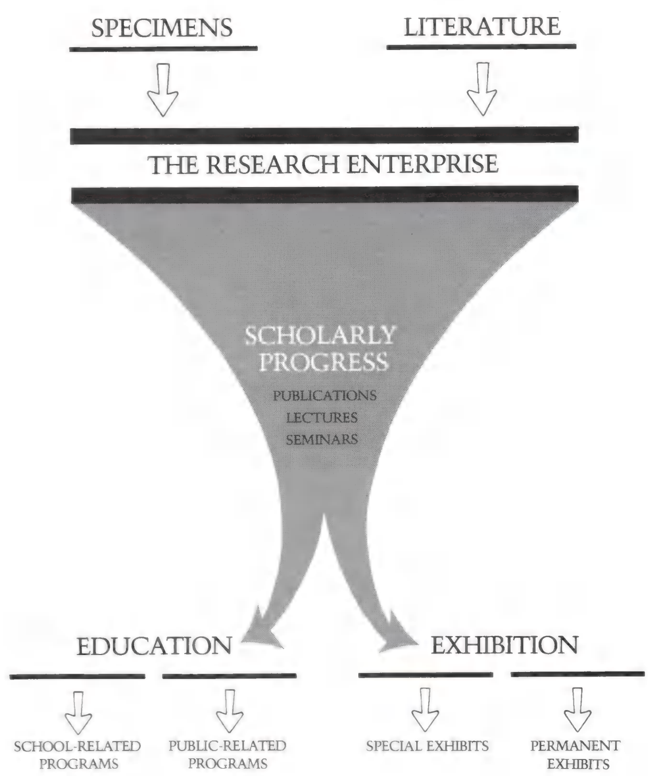
There are excellent models for orientation centers in history museums and particularly in the historic and natural sites operated by the National Park Service. The orientation center provides the museum with the opportunity to present its full mission to the public. At the same time, it can direct visitors to exhibit areas related to their personal interests. The trick is to point visitors in the general direction of what they want to see and still allow them to have a sense of discovery—for discovery is what museums and research are all about.

An orientation center is being planned at the Field Museum. It will be located adjacent to the main visitor entrance. As visitors enter the museum, they will be directed to the orientation center, where they will be introduced to the total dimensions of the museum. The goal of the center is to tell the remarkable stories behind the collections, their acquisition and their use in research, education and exhibition. Further, it will assist visitors in selecting a tour through the nine acres of exhibit halls. Introduced to the museum by proper signage, information booths and friendly staff, the visitors will feel welcome and comfortable. We hope that what they see and learn and how they feel in the orientation center will make them want to return to the museum again and again.

The specific goals of the orientation center are to:

- foster an awareness of the museum as a center for basic research and for interpretation of that research through exhibits and educational programs;
- increase visitors' understanding of the meaning of natural history;

Field Museum Flow Chart



- provide visitors with a base of knowledge and a sense of involvement that will make the collections on exhibit more approachable and intellectually accessible; and
- give visitors self-directed, thematic guidance to the exhibits.

The Field Museum will be introduced as a broad-based museum specializing in the fields of anthropology, botany, geology and zoology. It is somewhat unusual in that, within the parameters of these four disciplines, it treats the arts, humanities and natural science. Further, it is a museum in which new knowledge is pursued, not merely presented. In this regard the Field is faithful to the historic concept of the museum as a place of contemplation.

The themes to be explored include:

Collections. Objects representative of the museum's four disciplines will be related to specific research projects and exhibition areas. The significance of collection data will be explained.

Research. Topics will include the process of free inquiry, discovery, prediction and implication for worldwide impact; current research efforts and findings; and the role that collections play in the research process.

Interpretation. Basic concepts as they are demonstrated through exhibits will be introduced. This theme may include a unit on the development of exhibitions so that visitors can learn something about the process.

Interactive modules will assist visitors in planning their visits within self-imposed time frames. The final objective is to develop an itinerary that is tailored yet general enough to allow for the rewards of exploration and discovery.

An evaluation process is being considered for the center to determine visitor profiles and levels of interest. Periodically, studies in the exhibit areas will help us ascertain if the orientation center is effective in meeting its stated goals.

As the financial burden of maintaining collections and performing research has increased, the financial pressures on museums as a whole have also increased. All museums must develop new sources of revenue or expand support from existing sources. And that includes the development of major support from the local sector.

To generate this support, research museums must explain their full mission to the public in such a way as to increase public recognition of the special responsibilities that research museums carry. Enormous opportunities have obviously been lost, and the decision to explain the role of research in museums has been long in coming. The media cannot develop the image of the museum as a research institution; museums must do that for themselves. Cultivating recognition from the local community will be a slow process, but it is absolutely necessary if basic research is to remain a museum function.

A curator of anthropology catalogs artifacts from Nsongezi, a prehistoric site in Uganda.

At the same time, all museums have sought to increase the accessibility of their facilities, their programs and their staff positions. Now attention is turning to intellectual accessibility, with the translations by educators and exhibit designers of the work of the curator-scholars providing the bridge between exploration and public understanding. It is our good fortune that the financial imperative for research museums to explain their research function to the public and the desire of all museums to be more intellectually accessible are mutually supportive goals. Δ

NOTES

1. So states the opening sentence of Carl E. Guthe, *So You Want a Good Museum: A Guide to the Management of Small Museums* (Washington, D. C.: AAM, 1973), p. 1.

2. Research is not mentioned as a function of museums in the official definition of a museum developed for the purposes of the accreditation program of the AAM. It states, "A museum is defined as an organized and permanent nonprofit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which owns and utilizes tangible objects, cares for them and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule." H. J. Swinney, ed., *Professional Standards for Museum Accreditation: The Handbook of the Accreditation Program of the American Association of Museums* (Washington, D. C.: AAM, 1978), p. 9.

Honoring a Museum Master

Edward P. Alexander Receives Distinguished Service Award

WILLIAM T. ALDERSON

On June 6, 1983, Craig Black, speaking on behalf of William T. Alderson, presented Edward P. Alexander with the American Association of Museums' Award for Distinguished Service to Museums. The award, first presented in June 1980, was established to recognize unusual excellence and distinguished contributions to the museum profession. The recipient is chosen by an Honors Committee and is approved by the AAM Council. The members of this year's committee were Craig Black (chairman), L. Thomas Frye, David H. Katzive and Harry S. Parker III.

In honor of this presentation, MUSEUM NEWS *is reprinting two sections of the first chapter of Alexander's* Museum Masters, *which will be published by the American Association for State and Local History this fall.*

To be asked to present the Distinguished Service to Museums Award of the American Association of Museums almost requires that I begin by saying that I am honored to do so. I am. There are few assignments that I can think of that could give me more pleasure than presenting this award, because it goes to a mentor, colleague and personal and professional friend of many wonderful years.

The person we honor today is from the history museum field. So am I. And there is no one I can think of in that field who is more deserving of the recognition of this association than our 1983 honoree.

Edward Porter Alexander was born and reared in the state of Iowa. He received an A.B. degree at Drake University in 1928 and subsequently earned a master's degree at the State University of Iowa and a Ph.D. degree at Columbia University in 1938. Even before

WILLIAM T. ALDERSON is director of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester, New York.

receiving the doctorate, he had become, in 1934, the director of the New York State Historical Association.

In 1941 Alexander was invited to become the director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. For the next five years he led to new heights of scholarship and service what many regarded as the premier state historical agency in the United States. Following World War II Colonial Williamsburg beckoned. For the next quarter century—plus one year—he was its director of interpretation, and from 1948 to 1972 a vice-president of the foundation.

When mandatory retirement faced Alexander at Colonial Williamsburg, the University of Delaware recognized that he was uniquely qualified to become the first director of its museum studies program. He served in that capacity from 1973 to 1978. Upon this second retirement he—typically—turned his energies from full-time employment to full-time pursuit of his research and writing interests. Instead of showing up at the museum studies office every morning he embarked on a project he had planned for a number of years—one that culminated in his highly regarded book, *Museums in Motion*, published by the American Association for State and Local History in 1979 and dedicated to his University of Delaware students. Then he turned to a second research project, which shortly will result in another book from AASLH, *Museum Masters*, dealing with a dozen of the most influential leaders in the international development of our profession.

It is characteristic of Ed Alexander to be busy and to move forward. At the New York State Historical Association he was instrumental in arranging the move of its headquarters from Ticonderoga to its present location in Cooperstown while, at the same time, serving as state supervisor of the Historical Records Survey of New York State. In the midst of transition from New York to Wisconsin he found time to help organize the American Association for State and Local History. He served as its first vice-president and second president and became the author of its first publication, *What Should Our Historical Society Do?* He helped found *American Heritage* magazine. He was also president of the American Association of Museums from 1957 to 1960, served as chairman of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission from 1966 to 1972, began the Williamsburg Antiques Forum and was a founder of the prestigious Williamsburg Seminar for Historical Administration, which this year commemorates its 25th anniversary as the longest-standing in-service training program of its type. At the University of Delaware he served on the admissions committees of the Winterthur, Hagley and Longwood Gardens fellowship programs and was frequently a visiting committee member for the AAM Accreditation Commission. Since his second retirement he has often served as a senior examiner for the accreditation program.

Alexander's activities have earned the commendation of his fellow professionals. He was the winner of the Katherine Coffey Award of the Northeast Museums Conference in 1977 for outstanding service to the museum profession, and in 1980 he received the Award of Distinction of the American Association for State and Local History for outstanding contributions to the field of state and local history.

Alexander's colleagues in the field of historic preservation widely consider him the father of modern-day interpretation of historic sites—the leader in turning the furniture tours of earlier years into educational tours that address substantive historical issues. Most history museum professionals would agree with the observation of the present chairman of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation that "no one has made a greater contribution to the interpretation of histori-

cal properties." Frank Taylor of the Smithsonian Institution says that Alexander "had as much influence as anyone in bringing museums to accept the responsibility to interpret objects and to make exhibits and other public programs more responsive to social needs and opportunities," adding that he was "among the first to combine scholarly research, thoughtful concern for the display environment of historical objects, consideration of the viewers' interests and education and the employment of docents and role players to sustain interest and communicate knowledge and understanding of historical events and past styles of living." A former colleague at Williamsburg observes that he humanized historic site interpretation so that persons and events of importance became meaningful to visitors; and a former colleague from Delaware calls him "a leader in the movement to teach history through the use of three-dimensional materials at all educational levels."

The accolades of Alexander's professional colleagues could go on and on, but I suspect many will think first, as I do, of his human qualities. The dedication of *Museums in Motion* to his Delaware students is typical of the man who, after his retirement from the university, devoted countless hours to counseling former students, writing letters of recommendation for them and seeking job openings for which they could apply. I also know how much time he spent keeping up with the graduates of the Williamsburg Seminar, many of whom owe their present—and past—jobs to his continuing commitment to their interests. That personal influence has been felt by students and colleagues alike. One fellow professional says, "There are few warmer, more considerate human beings." Another notes, "Always his position was the calm, rational, informed approach that looked beyond the immediate to the larger, long-range issues. He is—and how rare!—a truly wise man."

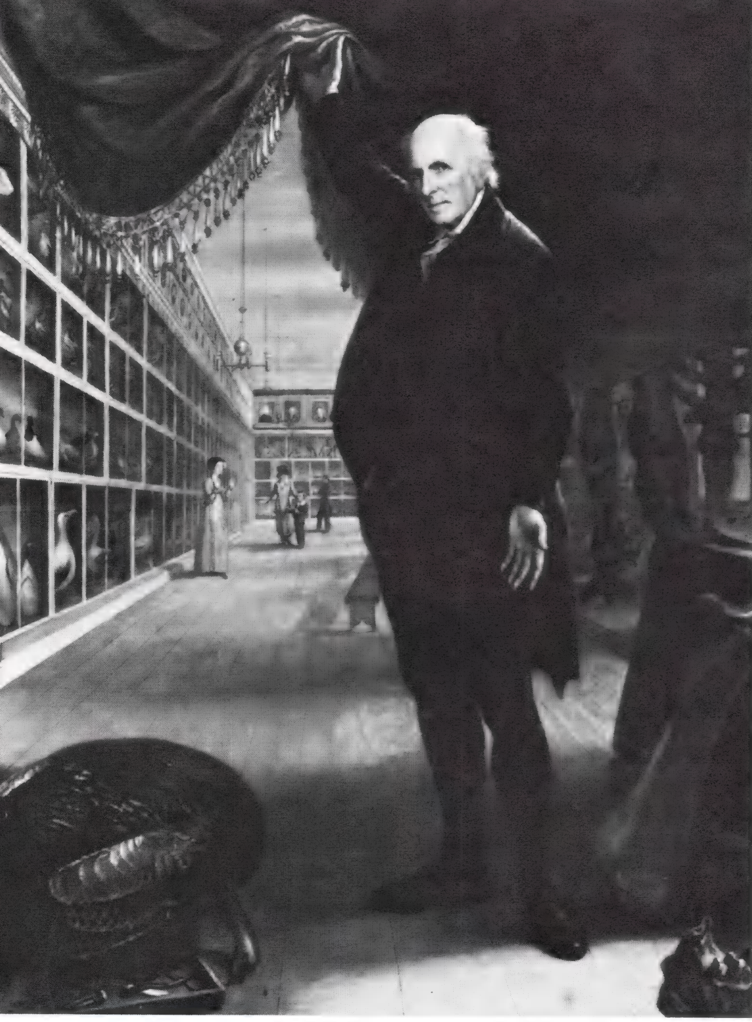
Ed Alexander is a man of enormous accomplishments and broad perspective. Through his work at Colonial Williamsburg he led the way to modern-day interpretation of historic sites. His writings have given us important new insights into the development of our profession. His leadership of the AAM and other professional associations has contributed significantly to our field. His interest in professional training, both with the Williamsburg Seminar and at the University of Delaware, has had profound effects in raising the standards of our profession. Add to that the characteristics of personal warmth, helpfulness, integrity, professional commitment and the highest standards of scholarship, and you will understand my pleasure in introducing to this distinguished assemblage Edward P. Alexander, the 1983 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award of the American Association of Museums. ∆

The New Museum

EDWARD P. ALEXANDER

Let us begin by examining definitions of the word *museum*. By the 18th century, it had come to mean, as Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) put it: "a Repository of learned Curiosities." Caspar F. Neickel (or Neickelius) of Hamburg in his *Museographia* (1727), written in Latin, called it a "chamber of treasures—rarities—objects of nature—of art and of reason." That kind of definition was encyclopedic, including as it did, natural and artificial (man-made) curiosities, the latter embracing also paintings, art objects and books. Dr. Johnson's "learned Curiosities" also suggests the audience the museum was reaching: collectors, connoisseurs, scholars—the educated, wealthy elite. There was little concern for the masses, who were considered unimportant, loutish and even revolutionary and dangerous. It is true, however, that, by that century, specialization was starting to appear. Books obviously constituted a different kind of object, and libraries began to be distinguished from museums. In the great houses of noble or wealthy collectors, paintings were often placed in a long, narrow room, lit by windows from each side and called a *gallery* (occasionally *pinacotheca*), while natural history and artificial curiosities other than paintings and sculpture were stored in a more private and secure interior room called a *cabinet, chamber* or *closet*.[1]

Two examples of modern definitions of *museum* show great changes in its meaning from those of an earlier day. The American Association of Museums, for purposes of its national accreditation program, in 1970 defined a museum as "an organized and permanent nonprofit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which owns and utilizes tangible objects, cares for them and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule." The association has since expanded that definition to include certain organizations—such as art centers, science-technology centers and planetariums—that do not collect objects. The International Coun-



CHARLES WILLSON PEALE

cil of Museums (ICOM), which has active national committees in about 70 countries, in 1974 agreed that a museum is a "non-profitmaking, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits, for purposes of study, education, and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment." Notice here the idealistic aim of *service to society and its development* and the emphasis upon the public, as opposed to any elitist group, and upon study, education and enjoyment. Both modern definitions are greatly concerned with public exhibition and education, functions almost entirely neglected in the 18th-century museum.[2]

This book treats 12 imaginative museum leaders who gave thought to the purposes of museums and took the institutions with which they were connected in new directions that have significance today. The study tries to understand enough of their careers and personalities and the times in which they lived to explain why they acted as they did in the museum field and to discuss the effects that their ideas and institutions have had, since their day.

Sir Hans Sloane, a leading court physician and naturalist of his time, was not a director or curator of an organized museum, but he bequeathed (at a modest price) his vast private collection to the government of England in 1753, to form the venerable British Museum. His holdings comprised about 50,000 volumes of rare books and 3,500 of manuscripts; geological materials; plants—including a herbarium of dried specimens mounted on heavy paper in 334 large volumes; zoological specimens, often preserved by taxidermy or in spirits, ranging from insects to fishes, birds and quadrupeds; antiquities and ethnographic materials; coins and medals; paintings, drawings and prints; and technological paraphernalia. Among its curiosities, according to Horace Walpole, a trustee under Sloane's will, were embryos, cockleshells, hippopotamuses, sharks with one ear and spiders as big as geese. Sloane conceived of the museum as containing both books and objects, and the British Museum opened in 1759, as library and museum combined. Not until 1973 were the branches of the institution separated administratively, and—later—an agreement was reached to move the library one of these days from the present British Museum in Bloomsbury to a new location on Euston Road, several blocks away.

Sir Hans occasionally showed his treasures to royalty, to notable personages such as Voltaire or Handel and to curious scholars like Linnaeus or Benjamin Franklin, who sought him out. Nevertheless, he favored a larger and broader audience, as is evident in his leaving his collection to the nation and asking that it be kept in or about populous London, where the most people would use it. In negotiating with Parliament about the collection, Sloane's trustees insisted that the public must "have free Access to view and peruse the same." For a time, however, the British Museum carelessly allowed many materials to deteriorate and reserved their use mainly for visiting scholars and its own staff. It was difficult for ordinary viewers to inspect and enjoy the collection; a would-be visitor had to make two or three trips to obtain a free ticket, one had to enter past armed soldiers at the gate, the escorted tours were hurried and perfunctory and no children were admitted.

In Philadelphia, Charles Willson Peale's privately owned and operated museum, fully opened in 1786, was very differently organized from most of its solemn European prototypes. Peale thought a natural history museum should be arranged according to the Linnean classification, so as to show God's plan and the natural laws underlying the universe, and he believed that museum visits would help make viewers lead lives of peace and happiness. Since humankind was part of the animal kingdom, a portrait gallery of Revolutionary heroes, Founding Fathers and great naturalists could be justified to accompany the natural history and technological collections. Peale provided scientific classification and learned lectures

WILLIAM JACKSON HOOKER

that used museum objects, and he led a palezoological expedition to New York State to excavate two skeletons of the mighty mammoth or mastodon. Peale also had a keen sense of humor and tried to make his museum fun to visit. He devised stimulating exhibits, including habitat settings for his birds; he showed live animals, especially snakes, and staged demonstrations of electricity and chemistry, eventually under brilliant gas lighting. Peale was never able to secure satisfactory funding for his museum, and, after his death, it ultimately failed; but he had set a pattern for American museums, with emphasis upon exciting exhibits and popular participatory educational activities.

Dominique Vivant Denon, after 1802, successfully established the Musée Napoléon at the Louvre in Paris as the most magnificent and beautiful art museum in the world, thanks mainly to the great masterpieces of painting and sculpture that he helped Napoleon to loot from the countries conquered by Bonaparte's armies. Thus the art museum became a vivid symbol of national glory and of empire. Though its special parties and civic celebrations were normally reserved for the court circle, still the masses thronged the museum on public days, while artists and students had special days reserved for them. As Napoleon's imaginative and tasteful director of fine arts, Denon also commissioned historical paintings, portraits and monuments, and directed the state factories producing porcelains, tapestries and carpets. He fixed the historical arrangement of old master paintings in the museum chronologically by schools and artists, rather than by color harmony or canvas size. He set standards of exhibition and conservation that continued to be followed at the Louvre and by the rulers to whom many captured art works were returned after Waterloo.

Beginning in 1841, William Jackson Hooker brought the botanical garden fully into the modern museum movement. Both botanical and zoological gardens are forms of museums, though their collections are living rather than inanimate. Hooker transformed the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, just west of London, from a small botanic garden and pleasure ground—the personal domain of the royal family—into a great national public institution. Earlier "physic" gardens had, since medieval times, usually been closely linked with university medical schools, but Hooker made Kew practical instruction and delightful recreation for the general public as well as scientifically useful for both medicine and industry. He established a museum of economic botany in the garden that showed how plants were employed for food, building, medicine, cordage and in many other ways. Kew served the British Empire well, sending out plant explorers to find useful flora that could be introduced into appropriate colonies, cultivating and improving them and distributing them around the world. Thus, cinchona—Peruvian bark that contained quinine, a specific cure for malaria—was sent to be grown in many tropical colonies, enabling the army, civilian officials and their families to live safely in areas where malaria was prevalent. Later, other spectacular advances occurred, as when para rubber plants were transferred from South America and sisal from Central America to Indochina, India, Africa and elsewhere. Kew also advanced so rapidly scientifically that it became a world leader in biological research.

Henry Cole, beginning in 1852, directed the museum that later was renamed the Victoria and Albert, and Cole's influence on museums around the world was marked. He was the chief executive of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the first world's fair, an extravaganza planned by Prince Albert and Cole and staged at London's Hyde Park in the impressive iron and glass building known as the Crystal Palace. More than six million people experienced that international exposition, and, as Thomas R. Adam has observed, world's fairs "opened the way for the renaissance of the modern museum in terms of dramatic displays relevant to the social life of the community."[3] Cole's museum combined collections of "world's-fair" type pertaining to contemporary education, architecture, building materials, economic plants, food and the like with more conventional art and much concentration on decorative arts materials.

ANN PAMELA CUNNINGHAM

ARTHUR HAZELIUS

The museum provided metropolitan London with special exhibits, lectures, seminars, night openings (using the newly invented gas lighting), parties and popular publications; it also served all Britain with objects from the collections lent or reproduced for local art schools (and, later, museums) and with spectacular traveling exhibitions. Cole's museum was a leader in the field of popular education, in many ways similar to modern American museums.

Ann Pamela Cunningham from South Carolina founded one of the first historic house museums in the United States when she organized the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union in 1858 to save from destruction George Washington's plantation of Mount Vernon, situated on the Potomac River in Virginia, a few miles south of Washington, D. C. The Ladies raised $200,000 in a great public drive to purchase the plantation and managed to protect it while it occupied a perilous no man's land during the cataclysmic Civil War. They operated Mount Vernon first as a shrine, but slowly increased the authenticity of its buildings, gardens and furnishings, as they pursued their ideal of showing the plantation as Washington knew it. A vice-regent from each state (with one as regent) served as the governing board of the association. The Mount Vernon undertaking demonstrated the way talented and energetic women volunteers could conduct successfully such a project, and historic houses, many of them privately administered by volunteer boards, constitute today the most numerous type of American museum.

The museum movement began to flourish in Germany in 1872, when Wilhelm Bode joined the staff of the Prussian Royal Picture Gallery in Berlin. Enthusiastic connoisseur, thorough scholar and ingenious administrator, Bode built a great "Museum Island" complex (actually, it was on the peninsula between the Spree and Kupfergraben rivers) in central Berlin. In 1905, he became director general of the complex and retained much influence until his death in 1929. His art museums reached the stature of those in Paris and London and could compete with the ones springing up in the prospering United States. Berlin possessed a museum of world art with not only Egyptian, classical and European artifacts, but also Islamic, pre-Columbian, Oceanic and Far Eastern materials. The collection overflowed the Museum Island into neighboring areas and even to the suburb of Dahlem in western Berlin.

Though Bode's greatest contributions were in the collecting field, he attracted heavy visitation with well-presented special exhibitions, experimented with period room settings and developed scientific conservation policies. About 1894, he organized the first Friends of the Museum organization in the world; the Kaiser Friedrich Museums Verein provided private funds that enabled him to purchase desired art works expeditiously; the Verein retained ownership of the art works, but deposited them with the Berlin Museums. World War II and the Berlin Wall have torn apart the museum center he built, but many of his collecting accomplishments are still visible

GEORGE BROWN GOODE

today, even though divided between the museums of East and West Berlin.

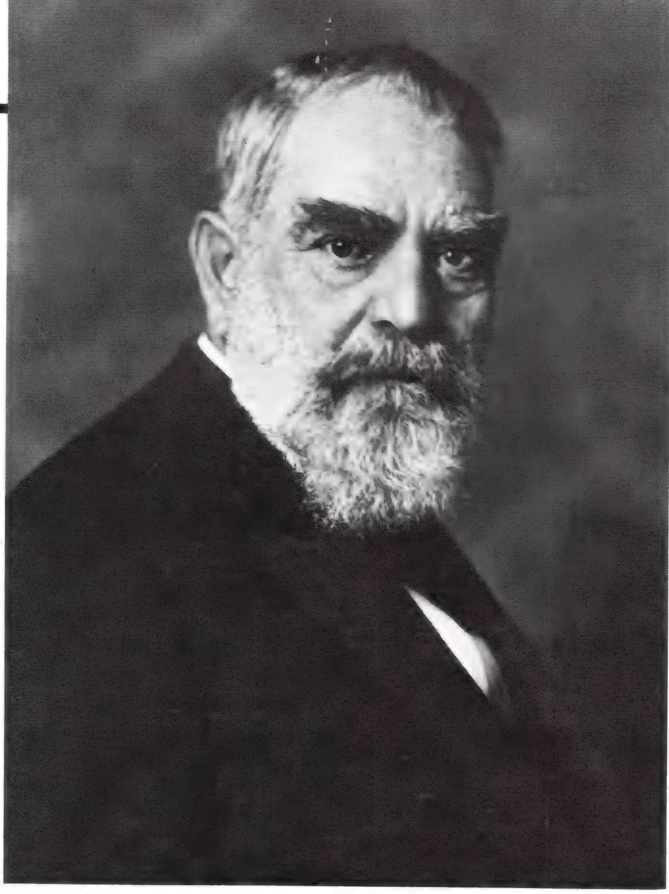
Meanwhile, another important museum innovator was at work in Sweden. Arthur Hazelius decided to collect, exhibit and study the material culture of the Scandinavian folk, especially that of the agricultural, preindustrial society of the peasants. In 1873, he opened his Museum of Scandinavian Ethnography in two small pavilions in the center of Stockholm. In his exhibitions, Hazelius used historical period rooms and theatrical tableaux portraying dramatic, sentimental scenes, some of which he took to the Paris world's fair of 1878, where they created a sensation. He reorganized his indoor displays as Nordiska Museet in 1880; and then, in 1891, he opened a new open-air or outdoor section on a hillside overlooking Stockholm harbor and city. It was called Skansen (Redoubt), after an old fortification there. To form a typical peasant settlement, he moved in buildings, chiefly of vernacular rural architecture, from different parts of Sweden, provided them with appropriate landscape and authentic furnishings and brought them to life with costumed guides and musicians. He also made Skansen the center for popular celebrations of national and seasonal holidays.

This first extensive open-air museum attracted enormously heavy attendance. The common people, who often had felt ill at ease in monumental museum buildings, brought their families with them to the open-air setting; the new outdoor approach combined inconspicuously the educational function of the museum with the lighthearted air of a picnic. The outdoor museum idea, whether it took shape in an actual preserved historic area or was made up of assembled buildings, settings and furnishings, soon spread throughout the world.

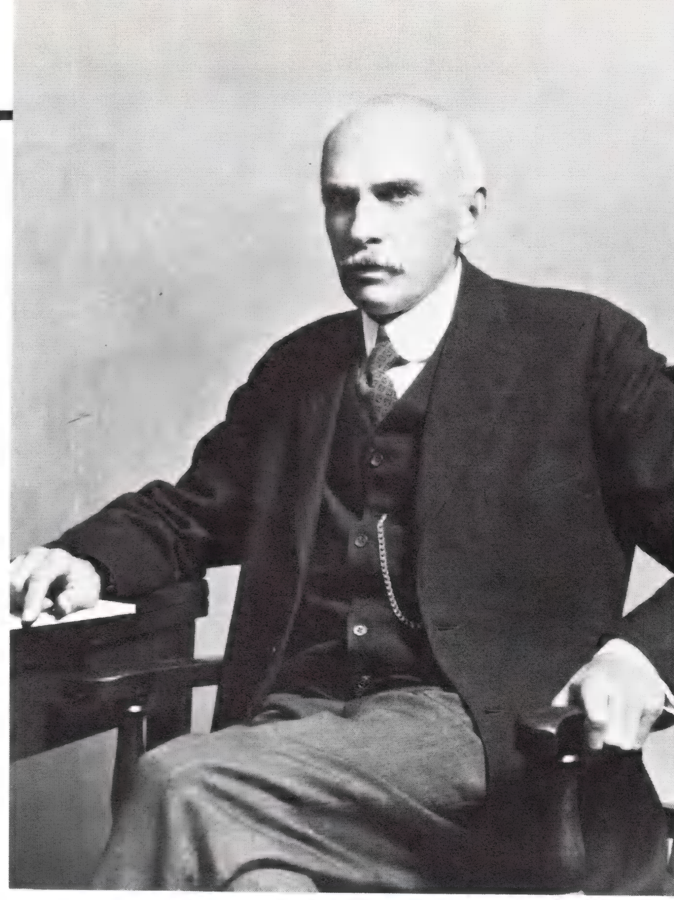
The first truly modern museum executive in the United States was George Brown Goode, director of the United States National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Goode, like Henry Cole, received much of his museum inspiration from a world's fair, in this instance the Centennial Exhibition of American independence at Philadelphia in 1876. After it closed, some 40 freight cars of exhibits came to the National Museum, and in 1881 a Victorian red-brick structure was erected to house them—the Smithsonian's present Arts and Industries Building. Goode set about organizing a new kind of museum—what he called a National Museum of Cultural History, which would include historical, anthropological and art objects, as well as the usual geological, botanical and zoological specimens of natural history. Goode thought out in detail a broad museum philosophy and administrative principles, and he made many contributions in case design, use of labels and taxidermy and in other practical and technical areas. Despite his tragic early death (in 1896, at age 45), Goode's holistic philosophy laid the foundations for the growth of the present Smithsonian museum megalopolis.

Carl Hagenbeck of Hamburg, a wild-animal dealer and circus supplier, was a perceptive connoisseur of animals who devised effective but humane methods of training them. Hagenbeck revolutionized the menagerie and zoo by confining animals behind deep ditches or moats, so that they could be viewed in what resembled their natural environment, rather than in cramped cages behind bars. In 1907 Hagenbeck opened his new private zoo at Stellingen, a suburb of Hamburg. The zoo was situated on a level plain, but provided with concrete mountains, pools and other appropriate artificial terrain, the whole made beautiful by careful planting. Prehistoric animals of concrete were added in realistic natural settings. The public could observe real dolphins, seals, walruses, penguins, elephants, tigers and many other beasts being fed and, in many cases, performing tricks. The zoo thus became a much more pleasant place for both animals and their human watchers, and the modern moated system is now used throughout the world. The zoo also has formed a refuge for endangered species, a protected place where their reproduction is encouraged.

A forceful and charismatic electrical engineer, Oskar von Miller, of Munich, transformed the industrial, technological or science museum from a storage collection designed chiefly for scholars and experts



Oskar von Miller



John Cotton Dana

to an active educational institution with maximum audience participation. Von Miller, who had had experience in managing early industrial fairs, founded the Deutsches Museum at Munich in 1903. He soon opened temporary exhibits in old buildings downtown, and then, in 1925, moved into a new, carefully designed structure on another Museum Island, this one in the River Isar. The museum had a large, comprehensive collection and a fine research library, but its methods of using its resources were especially impressive. They included numerous exhibits activated by the visitor, by means of push buttons or cranks; a coal mine, submarine and many huge machines; alluring demonstrations of the processes of chemistry and physics, including electricity; the first optical planetarium; and numerous educational programs for schoolchildren, industrial trainees and varied adult audiences. Though the Deutsches Museum had both a distinguished collection of historical equipment and telling methods of interpreting modern technology, the latter feature was adopted by many science-technology centers that sprang up around the world. And museums in other fields used the effective exhibition and interpretive techniques of the Deutsches.

John Cotton Dana, librarian of the Newark (New Jersey) Public Library, had been a pioneer in applying the ideal of community service to the public library movement. In 1909, he founded the Newark Museum Association to provide his library with an art, natural history, historical and technological museum that would operate under the same public service philosophy as that of the public library. Dana considered the ordinary art museum a useless "gazing museum" and its curators out of touch with the public and its needs. He used well-conceived special exhibits to show local industrialists and their workers what was going on in German applied arts, to feature New Jersey clay products, textiles, leather, jewelry and other manufactures, and to display inexpensive articles of good design purchased from local five-and-ten-cent and department stores. Such temporary, changing exhibits explored all parts of the community, making much of areas with immigrant and racial backgrounds. A constant stream of community and school groups came to the museum, and objects, exhibits, labels, leaflets, lantern slides and museum staff went to the schools and to all kinds of community organizations. Branch museums were advocated for vacant storefronts. These activities were accompanied by vigorous and imaginative advertising, which Dana considered "the very life-blood of all the education a museum can give." [4]

Dana's democratizing methods enlisted the community enthusiastically behind his Newark Museum, which obtained its own building in 1926; and his articulate books, articles, addresses and letters to the editor, all illustrating a zest for argument and controversy, spread his community service credo far and wide. Many museums today, especially smaller ones and the newer American neighborhood and minority museums, are continuing actively the movement Dana started.

The innovative contributions of these museum masters have changed the nature of the museum. No longer is it a miscellaneous collection of curiosities with little attention to the way it is viewed. No longer is it a mere storehouse, its carefully classified objects arranged much as books are, in a library. No longer is it aimed only at the cognoscenti—the learned scholars and collectors, including its own staff. Instead, its collections are divided between those exhibited for the general public and those reserved for study and research. The popular exhibits, whether temporary or permanent, are carefully selected, with themes that tell a story, with emphasis upon functional arrangement and with participatory activities to involve the viewers. Though study collections are often kept in storage, museum administrators strive to have them well arranged and accessible to scholars. And the museum is an active learning center, with trained guides or interpreters, skilled demonstrators, special lectures, discussions and seminars, popularly written publications, films and soundtapes and much hands-on participation, as well as an active outreach program that takes objects, publications, audiovisual materials, television programs and staff members to schools and varied audiences throughout the community.

These museum masters, however, were usually deficient in one area: they failed to develop strong conservation programs for their collections. In general, they were so insistent upon making extensive use of the collections that they tended to neglect preservation practices. There were, it is true, a few exceptions. Vivant Denon at the Louvre secured skillful cleaning and rebacking of paintings. Henry Cole at the South Kensington (Victoria and Albert) Museum gave lip service to protection of the paintings and art objects he circulated throughout Britain, and his curator, J. C. Robinson, built a separate collection of sturdy materials including copies to be shipped about, so as to keep the rarer and more fragile items at home. But the development of modern concepts of conservation, largely, has come later, with heavy attendance, increasing industrial pollution and the development of more scientific methods of controlling temperature, humidity and lighting and of making repairs and restorations. Indeed, professional museum workers are only now becoming aware of the crucial need for preventive conservation and of the huge backlog of objects that need treatment.

As the above summaries indicate, the industrial exhibition or world's fair has had great influence on the museum. Half of the 12 museum masters discussed (Hooker, Cole, Hazelius, Goode, Hagenbeck and von Miller) had some experience with such exhibitions, and Cole, Goode and von Miller had actually organized fairs, or a major part of them. The enormous crowds these popular shows attracted made show producers devise exhibits that would stand out and, in some instances, actually operate (for example, the Machinery Hall at London in 1851, the Corliss engine at Philadelphia in 1876 and the electrically driven waterfalls and lighting at Munich and Frankfurt in 1882 and 1891). The need of museums for better exhibition techniques such as planned circulation patterns, understandable labeling and better oral and written interpretation was clearly shown by the fairs. The general social and educational impact of these fairs was tremendous upon audiences from laboring classes, rural areas and small towns that had never seen such wonders. Still, William Stanley Jevons was right in doubting whether those walking hurriedly past so many objects on display gained much detailed and lasting understanding from them.[5] Through the years, the museum, with its trained interpreters, lecture and discussion activities, carefully written publications and vivid audiovisual programs, outstripped the fair that aimed only to entertain for promotional and sales purposes.

Goode clearly understood the difference between trade fairs and museums. He thought that the first stimulated commerce and manufacturing, but considered popular education as only incidental, while "Museums are *first of all* educational—industrial promotion incidental." Goode deemed museum methods a hundredfold more effective; duplicate presentations and redundant advertising displays were eliminated, a historical method of arrangement was practicable and the best illustrations could be selected and replaced as better ones were found. No wonder that museums were becoming more popular than fairs and deserved better permanent support.[6]

NOTES

1. Alma S. Wittlin, *The Museum: Its History and Its Tasks in Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 1-6; Germain Bazin, *The Museum Age* (New York: Universe Books, 1967), pp. 115, 116.
2. American Association of Museums, *Professional Standards for Museum Accreditation: The Handbook of the Accreditation Program of the American Association of Museums,* ed. H.J. Swinney (Washington, D.C.: AAM, 1978), p. 9: Kenneth Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s: A Survey of World Trends* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1977), p. 1.
3. Quoted by Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s*, p. 8.
4. John Cotton Dana, *The New Museum* (Woodstock, Vt.: Elm Tree Press, 1917), p. 39.
5. William Stanley Jevons, "The Use and Abuse of Museums," in *Methods of Social Reform and Other Papers* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1883; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1965), pp. 58-81. See also Eugene S. Ferguson, "Technical Museums and International Exhibitions," *Technology and Culture* 6 (Winter 1965): 30-46.
6. George Brown Goode to Sen. Joseph Rosewell Hawley, August 8, 1889, Smithsonian Archives, Washington, D. C., unit ser. 54, box 3, letterbook, 1889-92, pp. 112-28.

Minding the Store

New Pronouncements from the IRS

SUZANNE DUPRÉ MURPHY

In the past few years many museums have developed successful museum shop operations and, in the process, have become taxpayers. Under the Internal Revenue Service's "fragmentation theory" of tax application, the federal unrelated business income tax (UBIT) is imposed on the revenues from sales in a museum's shop of individual items that the IRS considers "unrelated" to the museum's educational purpose.[1]

The standards set forth in two 1973 IRS Revenue Rulings have proven too simplistic to serve as guides to the taxability of modern sophisticated shop activities, and pronouncements on museum shop operations that have been issued since 1973 have often raised as many questions as they have answered.[2] In the first half of 1983 the National Office of the IRS issued five technical advice memorandums (TAMs) to field personnel, who were auditing museums with substantial shop operations. Taken as a whole, they indicate an increasing awareness on the part of IRS personnel of the educational potential of a museum shop and provide some long-needed guidance for shop personnel on how to avoid or minimize sales of taxable merchandise in their operations. In addition, two IRS General Counsel's Office memorandums (GCMs), which formulated the legal underpinnings for two museum shop pronouncements, were made public recently. These important rulings and memorandums are briefly described below.

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- GCM 35146 (1973) guided the IRS Exempt Organizations personnel in the drafting of Revenue Rulings 73-104 and 73-105.
- GCM 38949 (1980) is the backup for TAM 8034022, a paper on museum shop sales that was withdrawn immediately after issuance for further consideration.
- TAM 8252011 was issued to the Zoo.
- TAM 8303013, which superseded TAM 8034022, was issued to the Museums Complex with a "chartered purpose for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."
- TAM 8328009 was issued to the Museum and Historical Village that "cater[s] primarily to the exhibition of items used by the average American family during various historical periods."
- TAM 8326003 was issued to the Art Museum that maintains a museum shop and conducts mail-order catalog sales.
- TAM 8326008 was issued to the Fine Arts Museum and Library, "the permanent collections of which constitute a record of thousands of years of civilization." It operates a number of gift shops and conducts mail-order catalog sales.

As the earliest document, GCM 35146 (1973) casts an interesting light on subsequent IRS thinking on museum shops. It states, for example, that "particular lines of merchandise may be considered separately to determine their relatedness." GCM 38949 (1980) also endorses a "categorization approach" to items sold. The 1983 TAMs, however, assert that the tax code and regulations "require that the various sales transactions be considered individually to determine whether each has a substantial relation to exempt purposes." Fragmentation has come a long way in 10 years; many would argue, too far.

The 1973 legal memorandum quotes the AAM's definition of a museum, noting that "presumably a museum organized and operated for broad purposes could sell and distribute a very wide range of educational items without becoming subject to unrelated business income tax"; whereas, a museum with "a narrower focus" would have a smaller range of acceptably related merchandise. Encouragingly, it notes that "no period or school of art is entirely independent of all others" and thus accepts a causal relationship between sales of reproductions of artistic works from outside collections and the educational mandate of the folk art museum under audit.[3] The memorandum also addresses the problem of souvenirs. City souvenirs, termed unrelated in the resulting revenue ruling, are more broadly described in the GCM as "items that are so trivial or have such a remote connection with the promotion of art (e.g. novelty items) that their causal relationship to the museum's exempt purpose cannot be demonstrated."

The memorandum also comments on the ruling on museum greeting card sales (Revenue Ruling 73-104).

> While we are not entirely comfortable with the frankly commercial scope of the methods of distribution endorsed in this ruling, we have been unable to develop a satisfactory legal rationale for a more restrictive rule. Once it is determined that a line of merchandise is related to the purpose of an exempt museum, it appears that the broader the market the museum is able to reach the more substantially it can fulfill its exempt function. We know of no limitations on the size or scope of related business except as to the limitations suggested in Regs. 1.513-1(d)(3) with respect to activities that are conducted on a scale larger than is reasonably necessary for performance of an organization's exempt function. That limitation has no applicability in this context.

There has been some concern recently that the tolerant position on commercialism taken in Revenue Ruling 73-104 might be rethought by the IRS because of the size and sophistication of some of today's museum shop and catalog operations. Indeed, the "size and extent" of the sales was raised in the Fine Arts Museum/Library audit. The National Office, however, reaffirming Revenue Ruling 73-105, stated in TAM 8326008: "Where it has been held that the sale of individual items is related to the [Fine Arts Museum/Library's] exempt purpose, the totality of sales of such items cannot be classified as unrelated activities." [4]

The 1980 GCM attempts to grapple with the increasing array of items—from related reproductions to unrelated souvenirs—sold by museums.

> Items such as reproductions or adaptations of items contained in the Museum's collection at some time are easily identified as related. At the opposite end of the spectrum, those items of a souvenir, trivial or convenience nature are clearly unrelated. These are generally items that display a logo or identifying symbol without further connection to the collections. The difficult task lies in identifying those items that raise classification problems, such as those that are arguable reproductions with utilitarian, ornamental or decorative aspects and those that present an interpretation of some theme related to an exempt purpose. . . .
>
> If the article is predominantly utilitarian, it is not related. If the utilitarian aspects of the article are incidental to the article's relationship to exempt purpose, it is related. If the primary purpose of an article that interprets some facet of the Museum's collection is to encourage personal learning experiences about the Museum's collection even though not an accurate depiction of an item in the collection, the article should be considered related.

The following attempts to categorize the actual products that the National Office of the IRS ruled on in recent TAMs. A good working knowledge of, and adherence to, these categories by museum personnel

should further the establishment of a sound defense of shop sales in future audits.

Reproductions of Works of Art. TAMs 8326003 (Art Museum) and 8326008 (Fine Arts Museum/Library) contained very similar language. "The sale of reproductions of paintings, sculpture, and artwork in similar media, found in the museum's collection or in other collections, imprinted with, or accompanied by descriptive literature" is a related activity and includes "prints, slides, posters, postcards, greeting cards and sculptural reproductions." One must assume that reproductions of natural history collections would be equally acceptable.

Reproductions of Artistic Utilitarian Objects. This essentially refers to utilitarian items that have been reproduced and offered for sale because their "primary purpose" exemplifies an artistic, cultural or historic connection with the museum's collections or exhibitions. A reproduction of George Washington's wine coaster that "contributes importantly to [the Museums Complex's] educational purpose notwithstanding the fact that the coaster has an incidental utilitarian quality," an 18th-century brass candlestick from the Art Museum and 18th-century fine art German china from the Fine Arts Museum/Library all fall into this category. TAM 8326008 states, "Where these items are sold with descriptive literature showing their artistic, cultural or historic connections with [the museum's] collections or exhibits, a sufficient nexus [to the museum's educational purpose] exists" so that sales of the items are considered a related activity.

Adaptations of Artistic Objects. These artistic objects have no utilitarian purpose. The Art Museum, for example, sells a small statuette of an ancient Egyptian cat, the design for which is derived from ancient Egyptian artistic depictions of cats in the museum's collections. As long as the statuette is sold with literature "describing the artistic, cultural, or historical connection with [the museum's] collection or exhibits," a "sufficient nexus" exists for "relatedness." Similarly, the Fine Arts Museum/Library sells a small cloth turtle, a copy of an 18th-century German ceramic, that is considered related.

Utilitarian Objects Displaying Artistic Designs. This category includes "items of present-day utilitarian use depicting artistic designs adapted from objects in the [Fine Arts Museum/Library's (also Art Museum's)] collections or exhibitions not having similar utilitarian functions." All are sold "with accompanying literature describing the original objects" and are, therefore, deemed to be related. Items from the Fine Arts Museum/Library include:

- a waistcoat striped tie, illustrating 18th-century fabrics,

- a royal scarf "adapting the design from the enameled hilt of a 19th-century oriental prince's sword,"
- an eagle-wing tote bag "decorated with the elegant eagle's wing design discovered in the tombs of ancient Egypt" and
- a Russian shirt, "a reproduction of a 17th-century original, very close in design and style."

From the Art Museum one finds:

- jewelry "patterned after a design in a slab from a North Syrian parapet,"
- a scarf with a "design taken from a Turkish Panel of tiles,"
- a table runner featuring a "design from an Indian prayer carpet,"
- a tote bag with a "design from a 19th-century Pennsylvania German watercolor,"
- playing cards with "designs from Japanese woodblock prints" and
- a necktie that features "patterned depictions of a chicken, the design of which was taken from a 19th-century folk art footscraper."

Before the knowledgeable reader is overcome with amazement and joy at this newly discovered category of related products, I would add that the Museum and Historical Village, "catering to the average American family during various historical periods," including, I would dare say, the present, did not fare as well as its art museum counterparts. The IRS ruled that although the Museum and Historical Village sells items that "evoke an early American period to the average

customer by means of their style [and] technology, [they] are not accompanied by any literature or other material at the point of sale." Of the museum's "utilitarian products" (service dishes, pitchers, plates, teapots, wooden trays or jewel boxes) evocative of an earlier, simpler time in our history, only children's toys are considered acceptably educational.

Educational and Interpretive Devices, Games and Toys. All the TAMs indicate that the National Office believes different standards can be applied to the education of children. Thus, the Zoo's animal puzzles, toys, stuffed animals and wildlife stamp sets; the Art Museum's jigsaw puzzles, kites and children's games featuring various artistic themes; the Museums Complex's educational toys and children's games, scientific and aviation models, tools and specimens; and, even the Museum and Historical Village's children's toys "that evoke an early American period" play an inherently instructional role. In addition, it appears that any item of a do-it-yourself nature—arts and crafts kits (TAM 8303013), needlework pattern books (TAM 8326008)—if related to the collections in some way, is acceptable, even if oriented toward adults. Adult games, however, may have to include "literature and educational information" to pass muster: one adult-oriented game, "Netherworld," sold by the Art Museum was acceptable because it "includes extensive literature and educational information concerning ancient Egyptian culture and art forms."

Books and Publications. Not surprisingly, this category passed almost without comment. The Fine Arts Museum/Library's "outside, museum and scholarly publications," the Art Museum's "educational printed matter" and the Museums Complex's "books and records relating to art, science, history and other areas of [museum] involvement" were accepted *sub silentio* or simply noted as "almost certainly" related. Cookbooks with illustrations from museum collections also were deemed related as utilitarian objects displaying artistic designs.

Original Contemporary Art and Jewelry. The National Office separates works of modern art and jewelry into two categories—originals and reproductions. TAM 8326008 states, "Museum sales of original art or crafts would be inconsistent with the purpose of exhibiting art for the public benefit. Original art sold deprives the public from viewing and appreciating the art." Under this standard, the Museums Complex's silk scarf and jewelry, which were sold as original pieces of modern art, meet the same fate—unrelated—as the holiday ornaments designed by contemporary artists for the Fine Arts Museum/Library. They are "merely art or jewelry crafted by contemporary artisans. They are not reproductions of period art."[5] The IRS carefully noted that it is "not following a contrary position held by the U. S. Tax Court in *Goldsboro Art League* v. *Commissioner,* 79 T.C. #28" and remains "unpersuaded that contemporary original art sales per se promote a recognizable educational or charitable purpose."

Meanwhile, back at the Zoo, the sale of "art items which realistically depict and interpret wildlife in its natural habitat" can be related.[6] Jewelry items sold by the Zoo, however, are "utilitarian and trivial in nature" because the "mere placing of realistic depictions of wildlife on jewelry is not sufficient to establish a sufficient causal relationship to be considered related to the [Zoo's] exempt purpose."

It appears that it is "original art qua art" that is unacceptable to the IRS; a "work of art" that "realistically depicts" something from the exhibits or collections can be educational.

Original Contemporary Crafts. Because the National Office's brief statements on works of art purport to address arts and crafts and include references to works by contemporary artisans and contemporary artists, the tax status of sales of contemporary craft and design items, even by a museum of modern art, is questionable. Literature accompanying any "state of the art" or "technologically advanced" items should indicate a close connection to the collection and detail the process or feature in which the museum is expressing an interest.

Original Historic Arts and Crafts. This important category is largely unexplored by the IRS educational diagnosticians, and, given the state of their thinking at this time, I think we should be grateful. Ethnic and folk arts and crafts—Eskimo carvings, Indian weavings, Mexican pottery, African tribal masks, Appalachian quilts and dulcimers—deserve a kinder and more thoughtful judgment than that rendered on their modern counterparts, which are often considered unrelated because they are "merely . . . crafted by contemporary artisans, . . . not reproductions of period art," and, therefore, not educational. An excellent argument can be made that sales of historic arts and crafts items educate not only by offering possession of the objects, but also by preserving knowledge of and increasing appreciation for the old techniques and processes themselves. (Perhaps the ubiquitous descriptive literature can assist here!) In any event another museum will have to make the argument.

Souvenirs. Earlier IRS statements rejected the argument that souvenirs imprinted with a logo are related. It is not surprising to learn then that the National Office ruled that key chains, umbrellas and tote bags bearing the Museums Complex's logo are "primarily utilitarian in nature and sold as mementos for the production of income, not to enhance visitor education." They "bear no causal relationship to the educational purposes of [the museum]" and their sales

are unrelated. Utilitarian objects such as mugs, ashtrays and dishtowels carrying the logo of the Museum and Historical Village received the same fate.

Linen towels "depicting and identifying ten exhibits" at the Museum and Historical Village are, however, deemed related, as are cloth patches and posters depicting exhibits from the Museums Complex. The Art Museum was flatly told that "merely affixing [the] institutional logo will not make an object related. . . . If, however, instead of the institutional logo a design from the museum collection is imprinted on the object (scarves, tote bags, spoons, dishes, umbrellas and neckties, among other items), the result may change."

This cluster of recent IRS pronouncements on museum shop sales appears to represent a sincere effort on the part of National Office to come to grips with the sometimes subtle but very real educational role that museum shops can play. Careful attention to the categories outlined above and to the reasons underlying the conclusions as to the products' relatedness should facilitate standardized and reasonable IRS audits in the future.

Remember, however, that the technical advice memorandums (TAMs) were issued to individual IRS agents auditing specific museum shops. They are not binding on all IRS personnel and, in theory, cannot be considered precedents. Should your museum be audited in the near future, the agent may be entirely unaware of these important developments. On the other hand, since some questions still remain open, the next few years can be seen as an opportunity to advance IRS thinking even further, before a new official Revenue Ruling on museum shops is published.

For example, although the "categorization approach" to products is helpful, perhaps the categories should be refined. Clearly much more can be done in the arts and crafts area, and the IRS's flat denial of the sale of original works of art as a related educational activity must be challenged further.

The idea of "accompanying literature" as providing the crucial "educational link" for many products is a welcome breakthrough that significantly lessens the role of the subjective judgment of individual IRS auditors in determining what products are truly educational. Subtle questions, such as how much text is sufficient, remain open. Also, the idea that, except for children's games and toys, only the written word can be relied upon to provide an educational nexus to the collections, cannot be entirely accurate. Perhaps it is fairer to say that accompanying literature can provide a safe harbor for the museum shop in an IRS audit. Lack of literature does not mean that the product is irredeemably unrelated, but that the museum will have to supply evidence of the product's educational relevance and, in the process, be more subject to the personal taste and standards of the IRS auditor.

The IRS seems adamant in its position that the sale of a "mere logo souvenir" is an unrelated business activity. Perhaps in the future some museum will successfully argue that such products are related simply because they promote the name and identity of the museum in the community.

Finally, the continuing propensity of IRS personnel to favor the older and more exotic over the newer and more mundane is troublesome. Why are playing cards with Japanese woodblock prints patterned on the back readily accepted as educational and 19th-century American kitchen utensils not? Where is it written that a design from the 6th century is educational; the 18th century, probably educational; the 19th century, highly problematic; and the 20th century, clearly and irredeemably commercial? Why does Middle Egypt always seem to fare so much better than mid-America? Perhaps accompanying literature really does make the crucial difference. One must hope that the IRS is not unwittingly setting standards of relatedness that only the biggest and most sophisticated museums in our largest cities can reasonably meet.

Audits of museum shops, and challenges to IRS positions taken by museums in the audit process, will continue to be of considerable interest to the entire museum community for some time to come. Δ

NOTES

1. See Julie Noel Gilbert, "Coming to Terms with the Tax Man," *Museum News* 61, no. 1 (September/October 1982): 18-23; Marion H. Brown, "Keeping an Eye on Each Other: The IRS and the Museum Store," *Museum News* 61, no. 1 (September/October 1982): 24-28.
2. Revenue Ruling 73-104 ruled on the sale of greeting card reproductions of art works by an art museum; Revenue Ruling 73-105, shop sales of an American folk art museum. Revenue Rulings are the only official rulings that can set precedents. Technical Advise Memorandums (TAMs), General Counsel's Office memorandums (GCMs) and training manuals—available to the public because of the Freedom of Information Act—are useful as guides to the current thinking of the National Office.
3. The 1980 GCM tracks the 1973 one noting that "the size and the broad scope of [a museum's] exempt purpose" can affect the diversity of items that can be related, but that "the nexus which is established must be specifically related to the particular museum [in the Museums Complex] in which the item is sold. . . ."
4. The 1980 GCM also notes the "disquieting nature of the commercial scope" of sales activities, but concludes that "the fact that the Museum's activities are very commercialized cannot be determinative of the relatedness of the activity."
5. Recall that with appropriate accompanying literature, jewelry may be acceptably related as "reproductions of artistic utilitarian items" or as "utilitarian objects displaying artistic designs"; both categories are described above.
6. A similar statement appears in the Museums Complex ruling (TAM 8303013).

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Solving Big Problems with Small Computers

RALPH J. MEGNA

Small museums are often slow to employ the efficient and sophisticated means of information management emerging from today's remarkable electronic revolution. There are many reasons for this: Budget-conscious institutions believe serious data-processing equipment is beyond their means or needs. And while some administrators are reluctant to introduce unfamiliar technology into their offices, others, citing the horror stories from the 1970s when a number of major museums turned to computers, postponed making a decision until "all the bugs are worked out."

Regrettably, these judgments are very expensive in terms of lost opportunities, reduced productivity and wasted resources. The costs associated with many manual activities, often invisible when plentiful grants and volunteer labor helped mask their inefficient nature, have now grown to the point where organizational survival —to say nothing of prosperity—may rest on the prudent use of a small computer for a variety of management programmatic tasks.

The key word, of course, is *prudent.* Delay, frustration and disappointment can result if the museum director does not treat the acquisition of a computer like the hiring of an additional staff member. The precise duties of the new electronic "assistant" must be carefully defined before purchases are made.

Many activities in a small museum can be executed more efficiently with a computer. To identify the tasks in greatest need of computer support, museum administrators should prepare a list of activities regularly undertaken by staff members or volunteers and test them against the following criteria:

- Is the activity an everyday function?
- Is it repetitious?
- Does it organize large amounts of information?
- Does it involve much staff time?
- Would it be done more often if it required less time and effort?
- Are periodic reports required?
- Are accuracy and consistency desirable?

Activities that receive more than three "yes" responses merit some computer assistance. Generally, the tasks most usefully automated are word processing, membership and mailing list management, budgeting and accounting, accessioning and cataloging, and research. Let us take a brief look at each.

Word processing. Communicating through the written word involves several steps—drafting, reorganizing, typing—that would benefit from electronic assistance. In a sense, word processing is the cornerstone of any manager's effort to control information. The typical museum answers hundreds of inquiries a year and sends hundreds of letters to state and local officials, members and friends of the organization. This correspondence, to say nothing of reports and grant applications, can consume frightful amounts of clerical time and energy if all of it must be prepared on conventional typewriters.

By eliminating the need to retype and speeding the editing of drafts, a small computer with word-processing software can increase the productivity of the clerical staff by as much as 50 percent. Although this efficiency rarely results in the reduction of personnel, it does make it possible to do more in a small office.

Membership and Mailing Lists. Keeping in touch with members, friends, supporters and even opponents through the mail is essential to the life of cultural institutions. Traditionally, name-and-address information has been alphabetically filed on index cards that are stored in cardboard boxes and mailing labels have been printed from Addressograph plates or photocopied onto pressure-sensitive labels. Under this system all changes must be corrected by hand and a new label or plate made. In addition personalized letters or mailings to part of the mailing list increases the number of staff or volunteer hours two or three times above that of a normal posting.

These routines cost museums thousands of dollars in lost time and low productivity. All information about a member or supporter need only be kept in one place—the computer file. This not only facilitates address changes, but allows the storage of information unrelated to the label—renewal dates, occupation, contributions, telephone numbers and volunteer involvement. The file can be ordered in many different ways—zip code, alphabetically by last name, renewal date—and can be programmed to print according to specific criteria, allowing fund-raising and sales campaigns to "target" their audiences.

Programs that accomplish all these tasks are generically known as "data base managers" (DBM). An office that carefully integrates a DBM and word-processing software can send personalized letters to everyone on a mailing list, a much-sought-after capacity for direct mail campaigns.

RALPH J. MEGNA is the executive director of the Quapaw Quarter Association, a historic preservation group in Little Rock, Arkansas. This article is adapted from an information sheet originally prepared for the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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Budgeting and Accounting. Fiscal management can be divided into two clearly defined financial activities—budgeting anticipated income and expenses for a specific period and accounting for the revenues and expenses during each fiscal period.

The laborious process of budgeting for many kinds of costs in each of an array of programs and projects has traditionally been calculated on a ruled ledger sheet. Today, a variety of programs known as "spreadsheet calculators" produce huge electronic ledger sheets that automatically recalculate themselves after any change. With this software tool, the user can hypothetically adjust different costs or sources of revenue and see the effects immediately. The budget process, which took days of effort, can now be settled and printed within a few hours without so much as a penny's worth of error.

In-house, microcomputer-based accounting systems have several advantages over manual systems or outside service agencies. If data are entered regularly, computers can quickly provide reports on the status of payables and receivables and prepare balance sheets for partial month periods. Computers can also print checks, and if the museum bills for goods or services, they can generate invoices, statements and aging and credit reports.

Museums should consult their auditors before purchasing any accounting software. Most financial programs are designed for profit-making, retail businesses and can be awkward for the kind of fund accounting required by non-profit organizations.

Accessioning and Cataloging. The basic program of manual accessioning and cataloging systems is, simply, that they can be ordered only one way. If curators want to retrieve information from the museum catalog by year of acquisition, classification of object or date of origin, they must keep at least three up-to-date indexes to the collection—an expensive luxury. This inflex-

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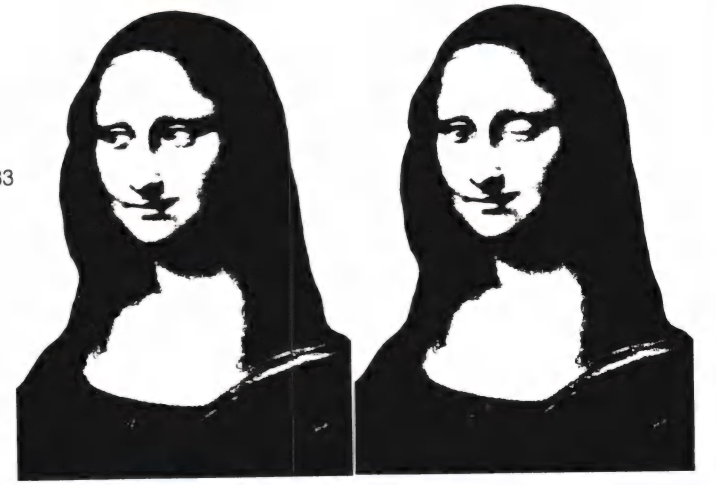

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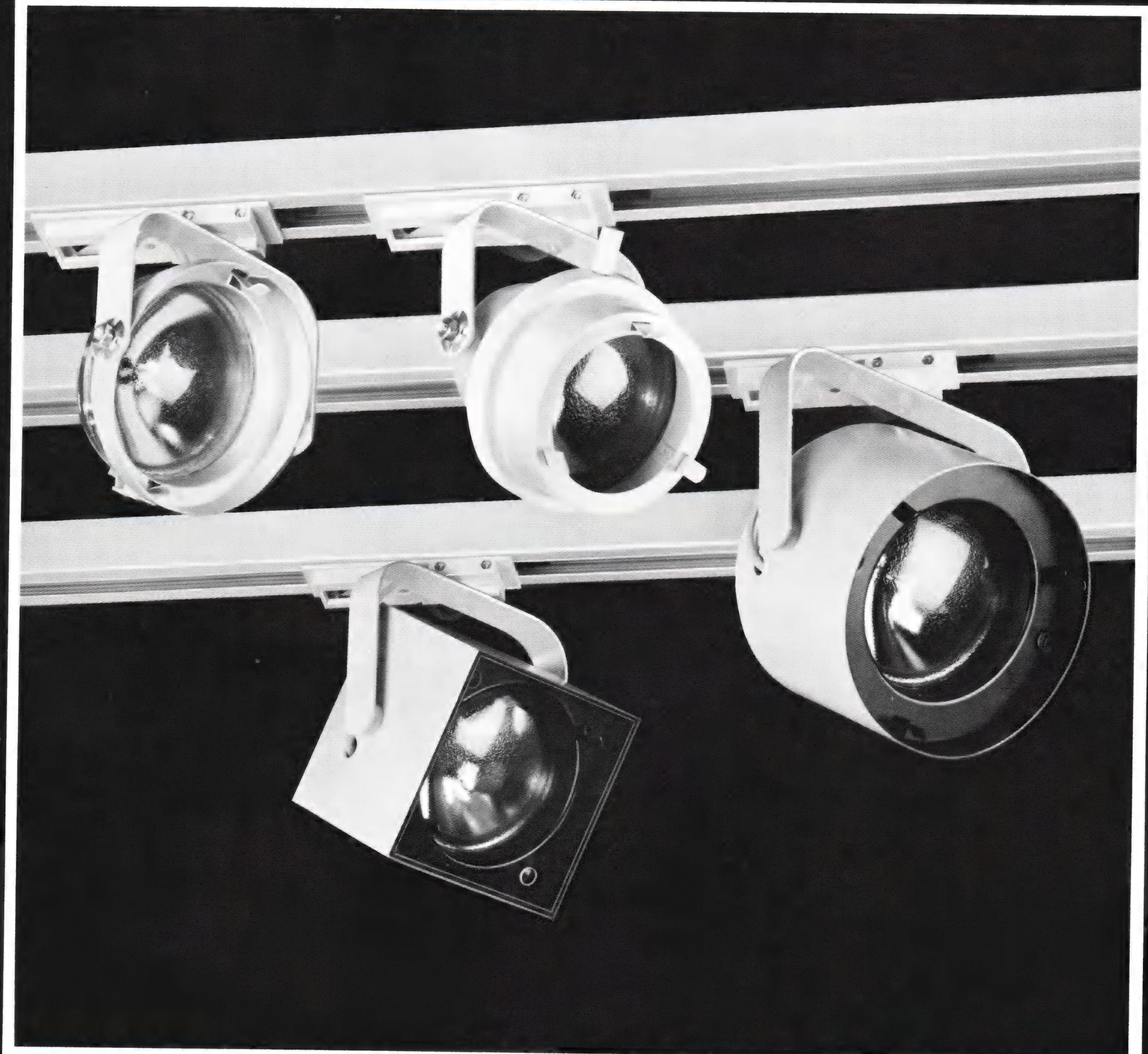

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Techniques

ibility makes most accession lists and catalog files extremely difficult to use for research and can thereby discourage full use of the collection.

But just as a data base manager can manipulate names, addresses and other information, it can inventory museum collections and library materials. All the kinds of information relating to a catalog or accession record can be computerized so that researchers can conduct "key word scans." For example, a researcher could analyze the collection file for all the items made of a particular material or fashioned in a certain style.

A carefully designed data record and file are essential to the success of an accession and collection system operating on a microcomputer. The museum staff should thoroughly define its collections management needs before beginning a data entry process that could encompass thousands of records and hundreds of hours of time.

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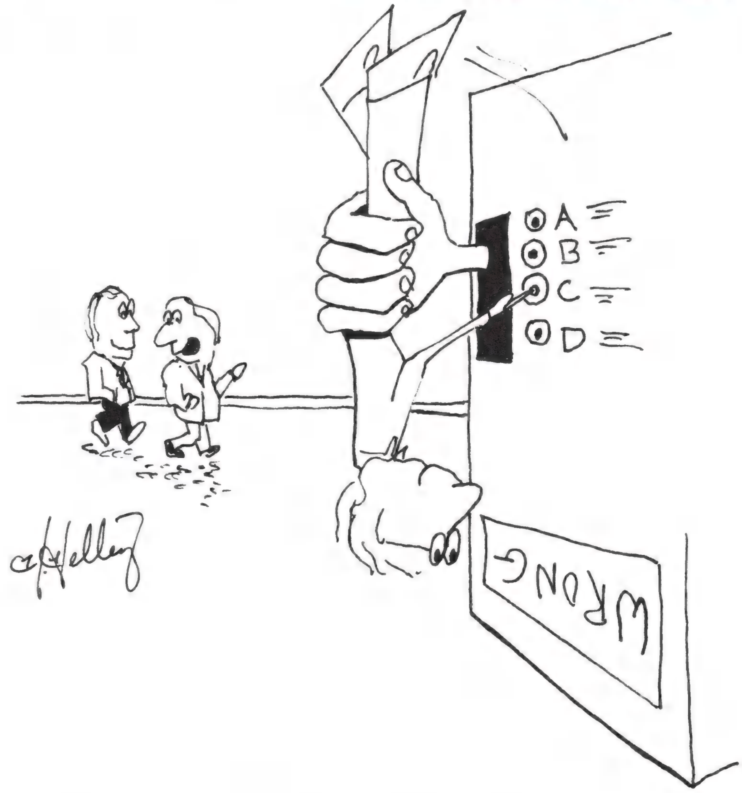
Research. The increasing number of "on-line" data bases—computerized information transmitted from one computer to another by phone—has revolutionized research practices. Information utilities such as THE SOURCE, CompuServe, DIALOG and BSR have huge computer libraries that span thousands of listings and can be searched in very sophisticated ways. Specialized data bases include bibliographies, foundation information, periodical indexes and guides to measure collections that are available through interinstitutional loan. Experts estimate that by 1985 nearly one-third of all small computers will be used regularly for "telecomputing."

Small computers are not limited to office applications. Many museums are increasing visitor involvement by using small computers as guide, teacher or operator. Several computer-based information gathering systems quiz visitors about their museum experiences in the museum, and science museums often design an exhibit around a working computer.

The careful analysis of computer ap-



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plications in the museum is the basis for a prudent choice and usage of a small data-processing system. *Software*—the programming—makes the computer run and must be chosen with utmost care. It is not realistic to expect a $1,900 computer in a plastic box to perform like a room full of data-processing equipment. Museums should beware of salespeople making incredible claims and avoid being oversold.

Once the computer is installed, the museum staff should have adequate time to become acquainted with its operations and applications. Judiciously purchased consultant time can speed this process and reduce the frustrations that accompany inexperience. If the computer is replacing a manual activity, both systems should run simultaneously for a while to provide a backup should the automated process fail. Finally, the museum's auditors should review procedures once a year and comment on the accuracy, efficiency and security of the data-processing routines.

Automated information systems are here to stay. Those institutions that do not purchase equipment because of a lack of funds or interest will gradually lose ground against those that prudently choose to employ the technology. Computers can help museum programs educate and inform. Museums without the new tools will find themselves voiceless in the age of electronic information and communication. Δ

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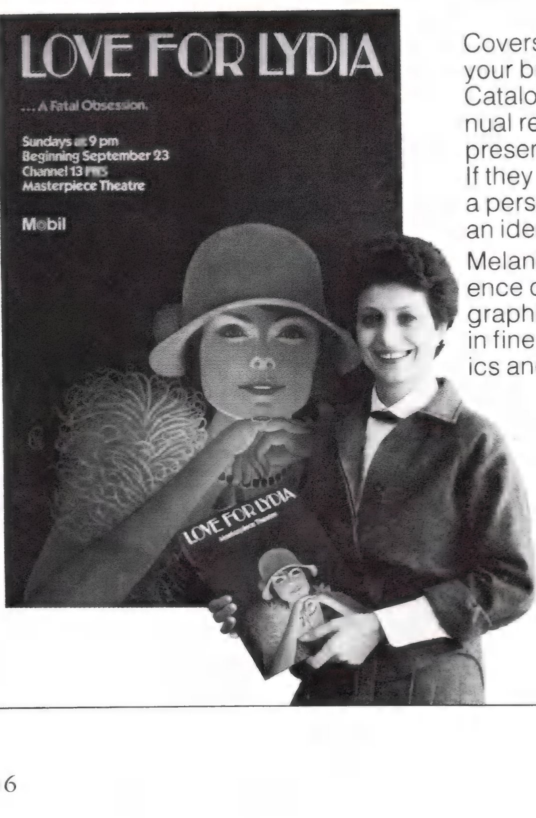

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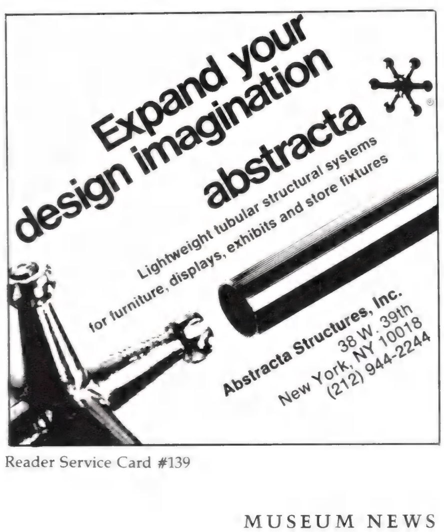

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BOOKS

The Museum Interior: Temporary and Permanent Display

Michael Brawne. New York, N.Y.: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1982. 157 pp., illus., hardbound, $33.95.

Reviewed by Val Lewton

When I started working in museums 20 years ago, museum installations were in transition between the old style rogues' gallery line-'em-up-and-label-'em and the tailored, sophisticated exhibition techniques common today. The blockbuster exhibits of the 1960s and 1970s spawned a whole generation of new designers who sparked a revolution in the way one assembles and looks at objects within the museum environment. Although one might quibble with some of Michael Brawne's examples, most of the handsomely illustrated and thoughtfully written book, *The Museum Interior,* tells us how far the burgeoning field of exhibition design has come.

Brawne's exposition moves from theoretical considerations—the inherent contradiction between museum preservation and museum display, the nature of objects and their transformation in museum presentation—to practical considerations such as walls, screens, pedestals and showcases. One entire section is devoted to preservation and covers temperature, humidity, lighting and security. The section on communication thoroughly reviews the problems encountered in using the written word to explain a visual medium. The author's speculations about labels, audio accompaniment and audiovisual supplements bring a sane balance to an often abused aspect of exhibition design.

VAL LEWTON is chief of the design unit at the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

As a designer for the National Museum of American Art (NMAA), Smithsonian Institution, who wrestles with the visual problems presented by a mid-19th-century office building with long central corridors and side offices, I was particularly interested in the discussion of the origins of museums and their planned layouts in relation to the spatial organization of the present-day museum. Brawne draws a correlation between the way people sequentially view objects in museums and the serendipitous use of ducal palaces as museums by the late 15th century. These palaces, he notes, employed a series of "enfiladed" rooms—one room opening onto another without intervening corridors—that have become the "prototypical" museum plan. Brawne feels the sequential nature of museum viewing is crucial to the way museum-goers experience objects, their relationship to one another and the "gestalt" formed by their particular order.

> Whether the path is tightly controlled or relatively undetermined, our experience of an exhibition is nevertheless always some kind of mosaic built up in our minds as the result of serial viewing.

Or to use a more arcane example that Harry Lowe, deputy director of the NMAA, once gave me, "Follow the advice of Sally Rand, never show everything at once."

Brawne makes the distinction between object-oriented exhibitions, or what he calls icon exhibitions, and theme exhibitions, for which he uses Charles Eames' work as his primary example. While I approve of this distinction, Brawne's even-handed treatment fails to stress the pernicious influence Eames had on exhibition design and the confusion in many designers' minds between these two contradictory ideas. Theme exhibits often resemble films or illustrated books on the wall and would do better if left to these mediums. No doubt there is something to be said for exhibitions that permit search and discovery and do not dictate a message or visual route, but one that becomes nothing more than a confusing, multilayered collage will quickly discourage and tire the museum visitor. A theme exhibit that worked was Venturi's *Signs of Life* (Renwick Gallery, Washington, D. C., 1976), in which a series of alcoves became alternating streetscapes (large blowups from color slides) and interior living spaces that represented several strata of American society. By contrasting a Baltimore rowhouse with a stately Westchester County suburban home, Venturi was able to make a coherent visual message while dealing with the complex social phenomenon in which people rely on visual cues to present their cultural values. The rooms spoke for themselves, and the complicated and lengthy explanatory material was relegated to a side wall.

Although Brawne's points are well made and he has a firm grasp of the principles of exhibition design, his illustrated examples are not always as sound as his text. For instance, he featured some particularly unpleasant designs—the freestanding circular cases at the Museum of Glass and Ceramics in Tehran and Brawne's own unstable-looking cases designed for a 1966 exhibition of ancient art from Afghanistan.

Throughout *The Museum Interior* Brawne stresses appropriate solutions to exhibition designs, not obvious or expedient solutions. This advice, important in all aspects of museum design, is crucial in lighting. Nothing is more distressing than a well-organized exhibition that is poorly lighted. Brawne reviews many technical aspects of museum lighting—glare, natural versus artificial illumination, incandescent and fluorescent lights, low-voltage lights, tungsten halogen lights, color temperature. He also notes man's ability to adapt, if the change is gradual, from one light level to another and points out that this adaptability allows museums to display objects under low lights, which meet acceptable conservation standards.

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The last section, "The Museum Experience," pulls all the analytical parts of the treatise together and examines the museum interior as a whole. The total museum experience is clearly illustrated by comparing the intimate, informal environment of the Phillips Gallery with that of the East Building of the National Gallery. It is the difference between a string quartet in somebody's living room and a full-blown symphony orchestra in a great hall. Both experiences are often enjoyable, but each suits different moods and needs. It is here that Brawne stresses the role of the museum designer as the public's representative in the world of museum professionals. He points out the conflict between the amount of information a curator thinks is necessary for an exhibition and the amount that can be assimilated by visitors unfamiliar with the material. First the exhibi-

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tion must attract the visitors' attention, then it can educate them.

Among the few books on exhibition design, Brawne's thoughtful and abundantly illustrated book is a welcome addition to a subject neglected by most publishers. Although *The Museum Interior* uses prestigious and expensive exhibitions as examples, small museums and galleries can easily draw from the wealth of information and advice presented within these pages. Δ

Creative Museum Methods and Educational Techniques

Jeanette Hauck Booth, Gerald H. Krockover and Paula R. Woods. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1982. 155 pp., hardbound, $15.75.

Museums, Magic and Children: Youth Education in Museums

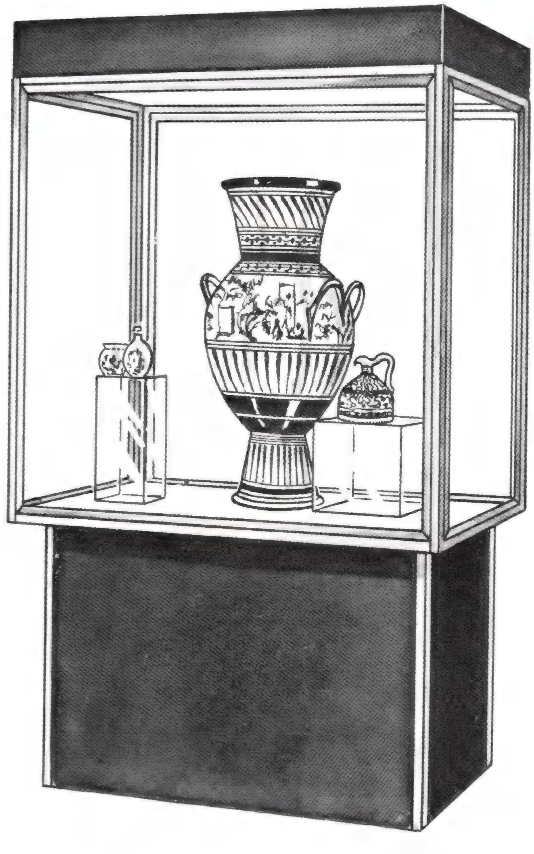
Bonnie Pitman-Gelles. Washington, D. C.: Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1981. 262 pp., softbound, $18, $14 for ASTC members.

Reviewed by Carolyn P. Blackmon

Museums contain all the ingredients to be magical places. They can transport visitors of every age into the past, present and future through collections on exhibit and staff who can translate the meanings of objects. Diverse educational strategies are paramount to the success of interpretive programming. Concurrently, the museum must have an identified purpose and the organizational and managerial skills to fulfill its mission.

These publications address problems in assessment, planning, implementation and management and seek to provide solutions. There are extensive bibliographies on these subjects. The most recent compilation appears in the spring 1983 issue of the *Museum Studies Journal*, published by the Center for

CAROLYN P. BLACKMON is chairman of the Department of Education at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and chairman of the AAM's Education Committee.



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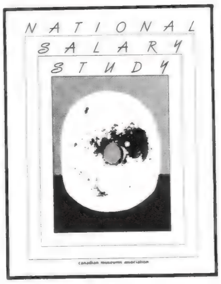

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Museum Studies at John F. Kennedy University. Many of the resources listed there, however, are out of date or print. These two books are unique because they are the first in some years to consider specific issues and to integrate current practices with descriptive information.

It is difficult to convince museum educators that exemplary programs must be documented, aired and shared through publication. Yet this is a time of rapid technological change that is already having an impact on our institutions, their revenue sources, staff composition (education and exhibition in particular) and management skills. The primary audience is children who gather quick impressions, retain positive and negative senses of place and formulate values based on experiences. We can help chart their course through school, parent and community involve-

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ment. Thus documentation is critical as museum educators address these changes and continually develop appropriate goals and objectives.

Although these texts are disparate in focus, there is overlap in sections about training. Their major thrust is directed toward strengthening professional standards. The authors of *Creative Museum Methods and Educational Techniques* took as a base an excellent technical leaflet published by the American Association for State and Local History—*Training for Docents: How to Talk to Visitors*—and attempted to expand its scope. Aiming at the museum educator, they sought to interject history and philosophy with practicality. Unfortunately the importance of goals and objectives is diffused. Discussions about the role of interplay between museum users and servers reveal a negative attitude. For example, chapter 1, "Museums' Informal versus Formal Education," displays a philosophy of separatism (we/they), while the emphasis should have been on cooperation and collaboration. Museums do not replicate curriculums; they serve

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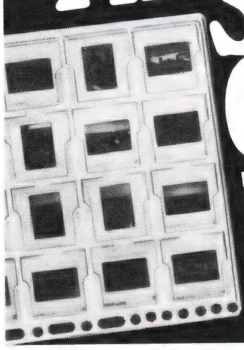

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Books

as resources to extend and supplement two-dimensional learning with three-dimensional real objects. The negative attitude persists in such statements as, "Volunteers are one group of people that every Museum has to work with in order to survive and be effective." That is certainly true, but it sounds like a penance to be endured rather than an important human resource.

Information on the training of docents is scattered and fragmented. Chapter 1 addresses the recruitment and training of docents and their roles as interpreters. Chapter 2 details the inquiry method of training and includes a short description of the value of workshops and an evaluation of the "inquiry tour docent." The following six pages deal with types of questions that may be useful, but they lack cohesiveness, direction and clarity of purpose. Chapter 3, "Educational Programs," reverts back to the recruitment and training of docents. Chapter 4, "Working with People," finally introduces the most important factors: the interview, placement, training and evaluation of docents. The book is a difficult resource for the beginner to use and frustrating for senior staff who need this kind of publication as a multipurpose training manual.

Museums, Magic and Children: Youth Education in Museums has three major topics: (1) an explanation of how to start a museum, including needs and analysis, program design and community involvement; (2) descriptions of education programs; and (3) a list of resources. The presentation is straightforward, the concepts are clearly defined and the examples of programs are detailed.

Charts, diagrams and well-selected graphics are expertly interwoven with the text. Examples of illustrated printed materials have been drawn from a cross-section of museum programs. The role museums play in discovery is stressed through demonstrated use of participatory and high contact activi-

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ties. Beginning with "How to Start a Museum," one can learn how to implement a needs assessment; to develop criteria; to establish purpose, goals and objectives; and to consider administrative tables of organization. Specialized criteria for exhibit and program development are described. Chapter 4, "Teaching in Museums," and chapter 8, "Volunteers in the Museum," focus on the roles, rights and responsibilities of staff and volunteers. Audience needs are described by age level in concert with guidelines that provide insight into planning for various constituencies. It is here that the overlap between the two books under review is strongest. Both publications discuss "inquiry" strategies, data retrieval methods, games, role playing and so forth. But the material in *Museums, Magic and Children* is well organized and informative, and the outlook throughout is positive. Compare the attitude toward volunteers: "Volunteers help link the museum to the public. . . . They bring a wealth of resources: special skills, knowledge, time, energy, and a commitment to the museum." Of par-

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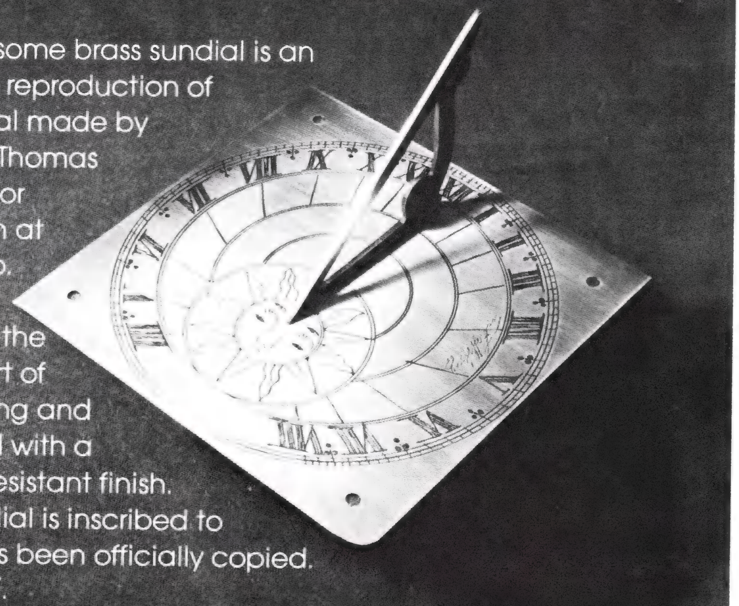

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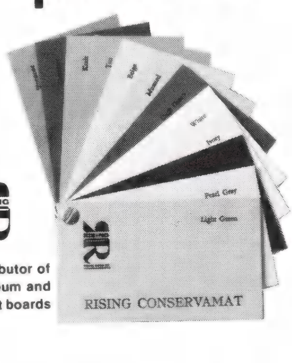

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ticular importance is the detailed section on the orientation of volunteers.

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Museums, Magic and Children is an up-to-date compendium of the "state of the art" in museum education. I highly recommend its inclusion on every museum educator's reference shelf for its usefulness as a planning tool and guide to resources. Δ

Making Exhibit Labels: A Step-by-Step Guide

Beverly Serrell. Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1983. 119 pp., illus., paperbound, $11.50, $10.45 for AASLH members.

Reviewed by Karen Fort

Alas, the poor exhibit label! So crucial to the interpretation of museum artifacts, yet so frequently poorly written, poorly produced, poorly located or simply nonexistent. The tragedy is that when this happens, the exhibit fails as a medium of communication. The point of mounting exhibitions—to teach appreciation for the rare and beautiful, to explain the new or mysterious, to remember the past—is forgotten if interpretive labeling is handled as an afterthought. Artifacts—beautiful or bizarre, rare or common—stand as

KAREN FORT is chief of the Exhibits Editors Unit, Office of Exhibits Central, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

mute curiosities without thoughtful, well-written, properly placed labels to give them voice.

Exhibits are an unusual medium of communication. An exhibit is not a newspaper or magazine, not a videotape or film, not a novel or advertisement. Unlike these more familiar mediums, an exhibit communicates through a delicate balance of objects, graphics and labeling, which requires its own specialized form of writing. The label gives voice to the object. The label organizes and gives emphasis, pacing and rhythm to a visual presentation of museum artifacts.

Making Exhibit Labels by Beverly Serrell takes the reader by the hand from planning labels for an exhibition through production techniques and installation. This little book fills a huge gap in museum literature. It considers the philosophy and ideals of label writing, offers tips on finding the appropriate words and discusses the points and picas of typography and the costs of various production techniques.

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and what constitutes a good label, Serrell is quick to note that "people do not visit museums primarily to read the labels." This is an important point for label writers to understand. People come to museums to see objects—usually things that aren't readily available in daily life. The label is needed to identify the object and to interpret its significance. It should be direct and to the point. It is not a vehicle for a scholarly discourse, which leaves the object a mere footnote to the label.

One of Serrell's strongest points is her argument about the importance of setting objectives for each label and for the exhibit content as a whole. This essentially boils down to: What is the purpose of this label? What one thing should the visitor learn? What is special about this object? If label writers/editors were to keep these few objectives in mind, there would be a marked improvement in exhibit labels.

Labels can be an invaluable organizational tool in planning and developing the exhibit. When they are carefully planned and written, they can subtly guide the visitor through even the most complex exhibition by clearly defining major divisions or sections of the exhibition, progressing from the general to the specific—from main labels that introduce, summarize or develop ideas to individual specimen labels that interpret the objects. Serrell's chart of label types is a template that can be used to structure any exhibit.

Serrell emphasizes the importance of planning labels early and provides a useful checklist of all the elements that need to be considered, from setting objectives to installing the labels. She might have gone a step further and added that the label writer/editor is a critical member of the exhibition team. There are, in fact, three key individuals responsible for presenting an exhibition, each specializing in one aspect of exhibitions as a communication medium. The curator is the subject-matter authority and thereby responsible for the content of the exhibit and the interpretation of the objects. The designer controls the visual presentation and organization: color, texture, traffic flow, graphics. The label writer/editor is the word specialist, a translator, responsible for ensuring that the labels are well written, well placed and legible. The label writer/editor must ensure that the label gives the necessary information and that it interprets and gives meaning to the object. As part of the communication team, the editor may see a need to fill a gap in the story and recommend the addition of more objects or information or replace a lengthy label with a map or diagram.

Throughout exhibition planning and production, the label writer/editor works closely with the curator and designer to ensure that the final exhibit is a cohesive unit and that each label is legible and has a clear objective. In short, the label writer/editor has a crucial role in presenting a successful exhibit. In a small museum, these three functions—curator, designer, writer/editor—may be performed by the same individual. Each, however, is a separate function and should be considered as such.

Serrell's section on typography—a complex and rapidly changing field—is thorough and more than one would expect in a book of this size and scope. It is a solid introduction for someone new to the subject and a good reference or review source for those with some typographic experience. Amid the terminology and technical information, Serrell included an example of a hand-lettered label. Although typeset labels may be the ideal, typesetting is expensive and hence not always an option. Hand lettering is a viable alternative to

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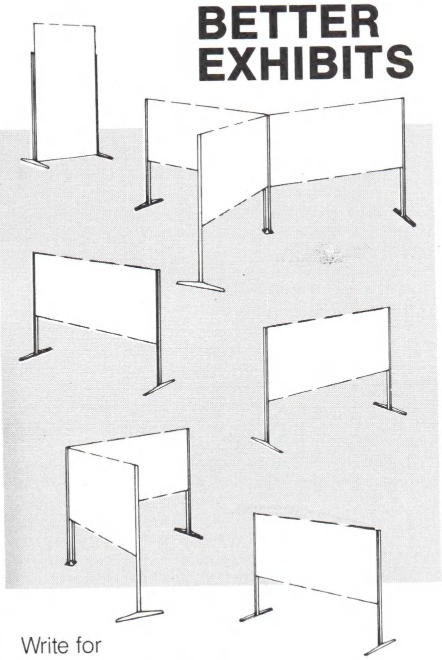

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typesetting and can produce legible, attractive and effective labels. It is a traditional technique and continues to have useful applications even in the most sophisticated presentations.

Throughout *Making Exhibit Labels,* Serrell is sensitive to museums on limited budgets, which includes almost all museums. In comparing various typesetting and production techniques, she deals in relative dollar costs and time costs. Time also must be "budgeted" into production costs. Among the many ideas Serrell offers for taking advantage of resources in the community, she might have suggested bartering for services such as typesetting or photography in return for credit on an exhibit panel. Museums are special places, and businesses are often pleased to assist and thereby be associated with local museums.

Making Exhibit Labels is full of examples of both good and bad museum labels collected from throughout the museum world, and a perusal of the photographs and captions alone offers a good deal of insight into the dos and don'ts of exhibit labeling. You may find your own museum represented! The value of this book can only be realized in practice, and its down-to-earth, real-world approach and style make it easy to use.

Exhibit labeling is an area that needs improvement in most museums. With *Making Exhibit Labels* as a guide and with practice (even with this book you can't expect instant success and results) most museums can improve their exhibit labels and overall exhibit communication. The best part is, no big grants are necessary, just some attentiveness and sensitivity. Your visitors will appreciate the unseen effort, and there is great satisfaction in presenting well-written, well-produced, properly placed museum exhibition labels. It is fun, enjoyable work. Δ

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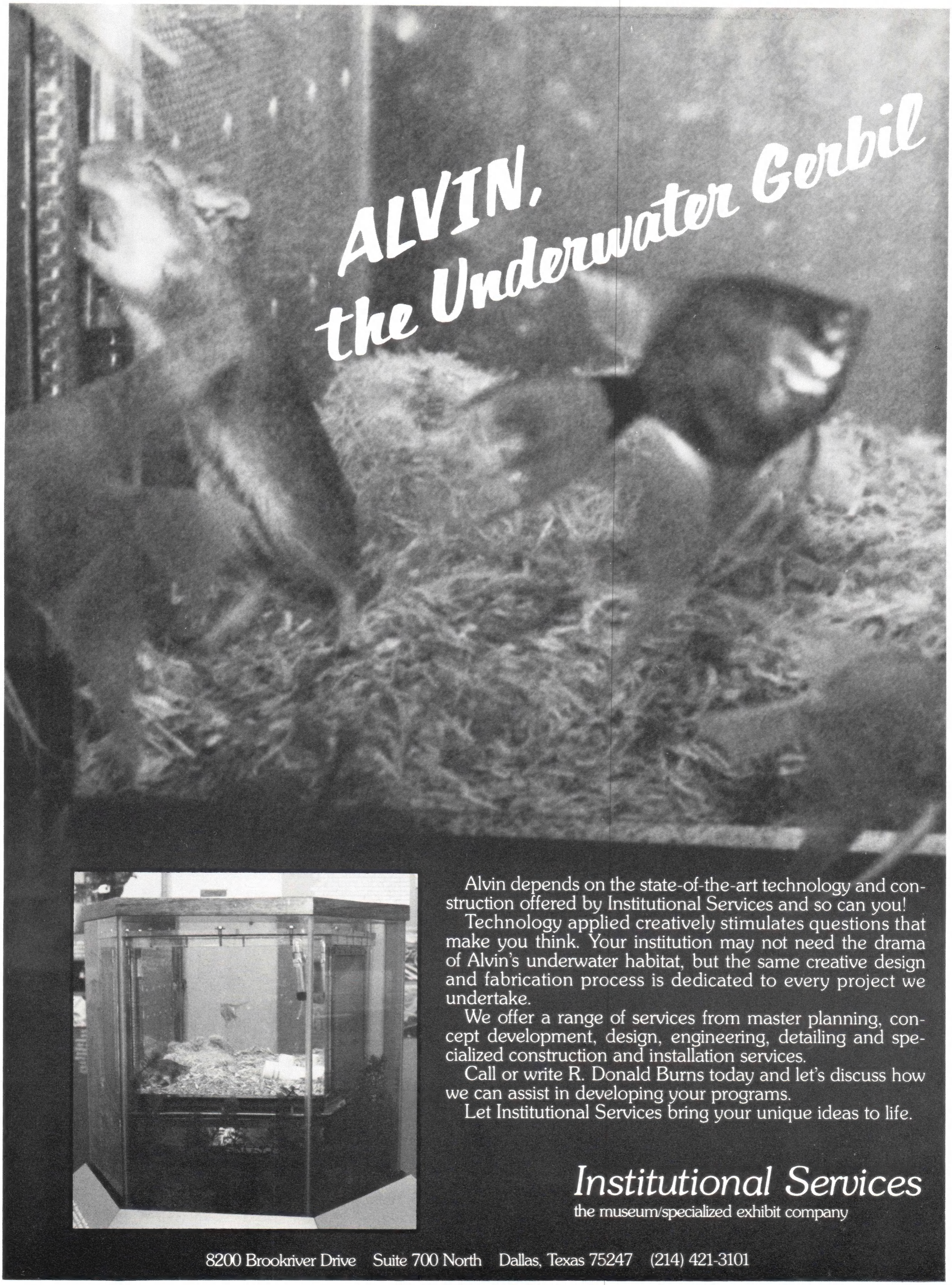

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